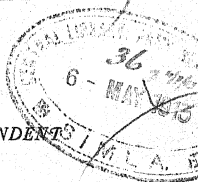


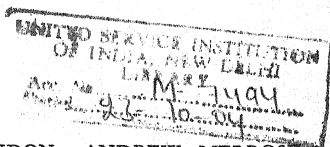
# THE BALKAN WAR DRAMA

By

A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT



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LONDON: ANDREW MELROSE  
3 YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C

1913





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To  
My BELOVED FRIEND,  
F. G. M.,  
AS A SLIGHT TOKEN OF GRATITUDE  
FOR UNWEARYING KINDNESS IN AFFLICTION  
AND IN REMEMBRANCE OF MANY A LONG  
TALK REGARDING THE COUNTRIES  
WHOSE DOINGS ARE RECORDED IN THESE PAGES  
THIS BOOK  
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

cast over events by a vigilant General Staff may have led to the insertion of errors which only time can disclose. For such we apologize, but we can at least say that those desirous of digesting the main facts of what may prove but the first scene in events, which are destined to alter the whole history of Western Europe, will have gathered some idea of what has so far only been published in scanty paragraphs day by day without any attempt at continuity.

My heartfelt thanks are due to those, who though wishing to remain anonymous, have rendered the most valuable service in writing certain sections of the operations and in providing photographs.

SOFIA,

*November 30, 1912.*

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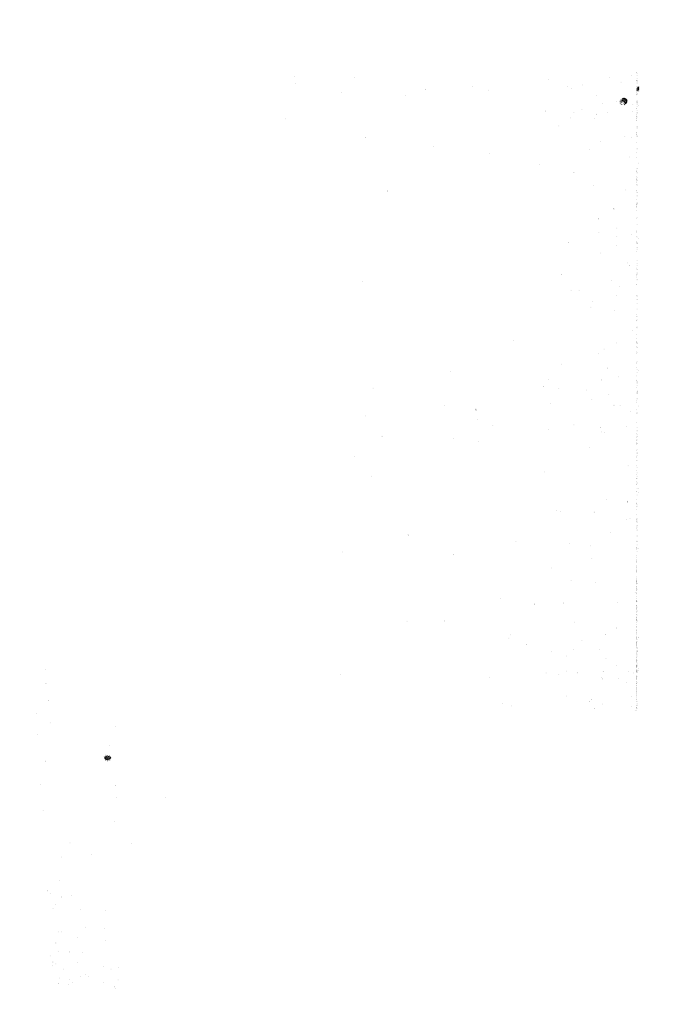
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The King of Serbia and General Putnik, Chief of Staff.

# THE BALKAN WAR DRAMA

## CHAPTER I

### THE BALKAN PROBLEM

FORTUNATELY for the peace of the world few questions of international politics have been responsible for so much effusion of blood, and incidentally of ink, as that which has been known for the last three decades as the Balkan problem. History affords abundant proof that the bloodiest struggles owe their origin to religion; and the deliberate and unscrupulous way in which ethnical and political ambitions have been masked by appeals to sentimentality and religion has doubtless intensified the bitter passions which have been let loose through all these years.

To the great mass of the British public the Balkans convey little else than a vague idea of some conglomeration of little known races and states, which are suddenly responsible for alliterative headlines in the Press; to which idea is added some memory that south of the Danube exists a

rugged mountainous country which has proved very useful for the location of melodramatic Ruritania or other petty kingdoms where the taciturn Englishman so dear to Merriman readers finds himself invested with royalty. This however falls very short of the reality. The real Balkan Problem has been hidden under a tumulus of brochures and articles which have sprung from the pens of cranks, faddists, religious maniacs, half-informed tourists and hire snappy cheap journalistic "specials"; and perhaps we may be pardoned for adding another drop or two to the ocean of ink, and relating as briefly and concisely as possible a few of the principal facts which have made history since 1877 and which combine to form the intricate tangle known in January 1912 as the Balkan Question.

Although mutterings of discontent had been heard from time to time in the Peninsula throughout the nineteenth century, the Balkan Problem, as such, did not really spring into existence until after the Russo-Turkish War, which culminated in the Treaty of San Stefano, signed March 3, 1878. And it is essential to remember this fact at the outset. The Balkan Problem originally had nothing whatever to do with Turkey. It arose solely and entirely from the jealousies and rivalries of the minor States and of the two great protagonists,

Austria and Russia. Over the merits and demerits of this treaty, which was rendered abortive, and the subsequent one of Berlin, a violent discussion has waged for over thirty years. On this point, our readers must consult their own inclinations and ideas, but these two historic documents might be summed up in the words, "The first was a vast political mistake; the second in trying to emend the faults of the earlier committed equally grave and gigantic mistakes, but it was at least more free from the sin of self-seeking. The best and worst thing that can be said for the Treaty of Berlin is that it meant well."

Only two countries were represented in the negotiations which led up to the Treaty of San Stefano, and if we omit a nameless secretary only four persons conducted the negotiations: on behalf of Russia, one of the greatest Panslavists that ever lived, General Ignatieff, and General Nelidoff, and on behalf of Turkey, Sadullah and Savket Pashas. By the terms of this memorable and short-lived arrangement Montenegro benefited in the direction of Bosnia and Albania, two small sections of which were added to her boundary. Greece got nothing. Servia was granted the district south-west of Nish, and Roumania the region of the Dobrutza. But the chief feature of the Treaty was the creation of a Big Bulgaria, extending from Thessaly along the

Ægean to Dedeagatz and embracing Macedonia, old Serbia and some of Thrace. It was a direct revival of the great Bulgarian Empire whose Tsars thundered on the gates of Constantinople, and whose people possessed a distinct language, but for more than 500 years Europe had been vouchsafed little evidence of the existence and certainly none of the greatness of Bulgaria; and the reasons for this sudden and prodigious extension of their territory was at once demanded on all sides. As a matter of fact, there was little need to ask for an explanation, since the real motives were patent to the world. At the moment Ignatieff, Kaulbars and a host of others were obsessed with one idea (which is by no means extinct yet): the necessity of absorbing the Balkan States into one vast Panslavonic Empire. The generous terms which Ignatieff had wrung from Turkey on behalf of Bulgaria were the result of a solicitude which on Russia's part at least was but thinly veiled. In Serbia the Obrenovitch dynasty had proved and was proving a stubborn and froward race, inasmuch as they were not quick in responding to this great idea of Panslavism. However, there was time and to spare for them. What required the utmost speed was the creation of this Bulgaria and the forging of such chains of gratitude as could never be broken. The young state would, of course, turn to its pro-

tor and liberator for assistance in its administration; and would thus pave the way of its own accord to its conversion into a Russian Province.

- Such was the Panslavist's plan, immense in its possibilities and, like all great plans, absolutely simple.

- Nothing unites the Great Powers so effectively as the knowledge that one of their number has monopolized some prize or plunder without allowing the merest fragment to fall elsewhere. In those days the Muscovite menace was very real; and the Powers saw, saw to the uttermost, the full purport of Russia's solicitude for the fledgling state, and in consequence lent a willing ear to the outcry of Servia, Roumania and Greece, who awoke to the fact that, as things stood under the San Stefano Treaty, not only were all their ambitions futile, but that their very existence would soon be threatened.

The net result of the formal objections drawn up and submitted by this alliance of wounded interests and disappointed ambitions was the Treaty of Berlin, signed on July 13, 1878. Slabs of territory and whole vilayets were shuffled about and moved and changed as if they were pawns on a chess-board; and in one or two cases the previous judgment was reserved. Montenegro, for instance, by the Treaty of Berlin, got nothing, whereas the path

was cleared for the grant of a part of Thessaly to Greece, which was eventually accomplished in 1881; Servia's portion was extended to include Pirot and Vrania, at the expense of Bulgaria, while Bulgaria was shorn right and left of the magnificent empire which had been hers. Eastern Roumelia, Macedonia, Old Servia, the section of Thrace and Adrianople were all returned to Turkey, while to add insult to injury an extra strip was added to the Dobrütza district which had fallen to Roumania. But this was the only point on which Roumania could congratulate herself. Of all the Balkan peoples, she had given Russia the most valuable assistance throughout the war. The gallantry of the Roumanian cavalry was a byword. And their reward for this loyalty was the loss of the district of Bessarabia, which was added to the empire of their generous allies, the Russians. Last, but by no means less must be mentioned another clause in this great Treaty, the now famous Art. XXIII, which provided for reforms in the vilayets which comprise what is generally known as Macedonia. Art. XXIII, however, was not put into execution.

It will be seen that the Powers had succeeded admirably in their main purpose. They had rolled up the Big Bulgaria. But they could not put away from her the dreams of once again holding the

Struma and the Vardar, of seeing the Bulgarian flag on the Ægean.

The ambitions of a dogged and resolute people had been kindled into a flame, which smouldered throughout the next thirty years, despite the attempts of Europe on the one side and Russia on the other to smother it once and for all.

The discomfiture of Bulgaria, however, was the sole solace of the smaller states. The dreams of the Serb were rudely shattered. Not even the tiniest strip of Bosnia was Montenegro's now, while in the Sandjak, that tongue of land which divides the two Slav cousins, there were Austrian garrisons. What was Nish, Pirot and Vrania to this?

In the devilish ingenuity with which the Powers placed every obstacle in the path of racial unity, with which they traded on interstate jealousy and played off people against people, can be traced the cause of the sullen animosity so apparent in the long discord of the next three decades, and for this the Berlin Treaty must be held responsible. But it certainly did one good thing, it thwarted Ignatieff's Panslavism, and staved off a greater menace to Europe than was ever afforded by the dreams of Napoleon.

The Balkan Problem was now fully matured. Each state kept a watchful eye on its neighbour. But for a year or two Europe was not troubled



with their bickerings, since both in Serbia and Bulgaria a grim and secret struggle was being waged with an ever-present and resourceful foe, and only the vaguest echoes of the conflict were allowed to reach the capitals of Western Europe. Foiled for a time, Russia had not abandoned—indeed she rarely does abandon—her hopes of building up a vast Panslavonic Empire, the shores of which would be washed by the Baltic and the Ægean, the Black and the Adriatic seas; and her agents were kept in constant service. But the path was not as smooth as Russia might have hoped. In Serbia, it is true, the appeal met with some success: for there it was Slav to Slav, like calling to like. But with the temporary creation of a Big Bulgaria had sprung up the memory of the old Bulgaria before it became Slavicized, whose monarchs wore the proud title of Tsar, before a Russian Tsar was ever dreamed of. The people clamoured for a national existence; it felt itself capable of working out its own destiny. At the critical moment the needful man was born, and Stamboloff completed what the Berlin Treaty had begun.

But this duel, though postponing the struggle for expansion, only tended to develop racial aspirations, especially when the Bulgarians in the Turkish provinces watched the solid unanimity of their free brethren in resisting the bludgeoning methods

of General Kaulbars. So bent was he on dragoon-  
ing the country into Russaphilism, that in some  
places was heard the ominous cry, "Better Turk  
than Russian." The Bulgarians round Philippopoli  
s and in Eastern Roumelia generally had a more  
intimate reason for their interest in these new de-  
velopments. They had by no means forgotten  
their brief inclusion in the Big Bulgaria, and at last  
decided to take the law into their own hands.  
Secret messages had passed between Stamboloff's  
intimate friends and the leaders of the Philippopolis  
movement, but even he was unaware of the exact  
date and was somewhat surprised when the news  
reached him that the Bulgarians of Philippopolis  
had proclaimed their independence and the annexa-  
tion of Eastern Roumelia to the Principality of  
Bulgaria. The Balkan Problem had reappeared  
with a vengeance.

Stamboloff lost no time in urging his master,  
Prince Alexander, to accept the fact and risk the  
consequences. At this period Alexander was ruin-  
ing his career as Prince of Bulgaria by fawning on  
the Tsar, and whatever else might be uncertain  
as the final outcome of this *coup d'état*, there could  
not be the slightest doubt that Russia would be  
thoroughly displeased at this new development.  
Russia's displeasure, however, seldom weighed on  
Stamboloff's conscience, and after a little trouble

he persuaded Alexander to follow his advice. It was on this occasion that he made use of the famous phrase, "The one road, sire, leads to Philippopolis, and as far further as God may please; the other to the Danube and Darmstadt."

The direct answer to Bulgaria's recognition of Roumelian independence was a declaration of war from Servia, who had been primed for this by Russia. The result of the war was known to the world in a fortnight, and it is indeed curious that it should have been left to Austria of all countries to prevent the triumphal entry of the Bulgarians into Belgrade. Russia for the moment remained discreetly in the background, though this did not prevent her from offering the most venomous resistance to the Bulgarian claims, when the matter came to be settled in the diplomatic lists.

But in England Bulgaria had found a sincere friend. Sir William White was instructed to give them his support as far as possible, and since the Sultan was unwilling to go to war over the revolted province for fear of being assassinated once the Constantinople garrison was withdrawn, the task of befriending Bulgaria was not so difficult as might have been expected. Russia's rancour and malice were visible at every point: indeed, some of her objections were so childish that it became obvious that her opposition was based on purely

personal grounds and not on high political reasons. Sir William White scored a great victory. From Serbia, however, who had wantonly declared war on a friendly nation at a very critical time, Bulgaria got no amends. But her eyes were opened. She learnt that no treachery was too black to be used in the struggle under the Balkan Problem, if there were a possibility of gaining thereby a yard of territory, or at least of preventing its acquisition by a neighbour.

Throughout this period there had been no appeal to religious sentiment, though the Bulgarian schism and declaration of an independent exarchate had increased the bitterness between Sofia and Athens. As yet, however, this quarrel was in its infancy, but it was sufficient to shed another sidelight on the Balkan Problem during the next few years. For the first time since 1821 Greece had produced a really great statesman, Charilaos Trikoupis, though owing to a somewhat frigid and unemotional presence, he was never able to make himself popular with his own people. One of his really great ideas was the formation of a Balkan League to drive Turkey out of Europe and divide the European vilayets between the victors. Stamboloff was approached on this subject; but he saw further than any of his contemporaries. In the first place the raw, untrained peasant levies which were all that

the Balkan allies would be able to muster would stand but a poor chance against the Sultan's regulars ; while the brunt of the attack would fall on the nearest belligerent, Bulgaria, who would very probably be crushed. In the second both Greeks and Serbs professed the most complete contempt for the Bulgarians, whom they considered as little better than barbarians.<sup>1</sup> Even if they were victorious the share that would fall to Bulgaria would be the smallest ; and since Stamboloff, ardent Bulgarian that he was, knew that his country was worth more than that, knew, in fact, that she would one day predominate the peninsula, he wisely decided that the time for her to move was not yet come, and refused. M. Trikoupis showed his perspicacity as a statesman in attributing this refusal to " Bulgaria's boundless ambition " ; but he would have been better advised not to have approached Bulgaria at all, for Stamboloff, determined to bring some grist to the mill by means of this intelligence, reported to the Sultan this plot which was being hatched by his neighbours, and was rewarded for his loyalty by the extension of most important ecclesiastical privileges to the Exarchate.

But other events during these years were tending

<sup>1</sup> In Athens, even as late as 1907, *βάρβαρος* and *βουλγαρός* were almost synonymous.

to mark out a line of policy which ambitious and unscrupulous statesmen could not but follow. The storm of indignation which had been aroused over the Armenian massacres showed what could be achieved by an appeal to the sympathies of the Western world; and the sinister record of the Internal Revolutionary Committee, of which more will be heard later, has proved that unfortunately the hint was only too quickly taken. The Balkan Problem at once assumed a new complexion—a complexion as literally artificial as that which is worn behind the footlights. Articles were published about Turkish misrule; the Cross was invoked against the Crescent; in fact the whole paraphernalia of catchwords and stock phrases with which we are so familiar to-day was now put on the stage for the first time. Macedonia with its fertile valleys had long been the coveted spot, and it was now realized that Balkan ambitions must be centred on this district. Meanwhile Austria and Russia began to cast covetous eyes on certain portions. Austria saw in Salonika the outlet so necessary for her Hungarian produce; Russia watched Kavalla and reflected that the possession of that would neutralize the strategical value of the Dardanelles. In some respects, of course, there was a legitimate feeling of the need of expansion and self-development; but under the guise of

philanthropic assistance, the agents of the two great Powers fomented the restlessness and agitation in all the states.

Yet strangely enough the measure which had been drawn up by the united brains of Europe and was supposed to be the panacea of all these ills, Art. XXIII, was never invoked. Affairs went from bad to worse in Macedonia, which gradually became the main scene of action; in fact, from being merely a side issue, the Macedonian question obscured the main objective, and to the general public the Balkan Problem was known as the Macedonian Problem. The new name had a better and more persuasive ring. It threw a friendly mantle over the inter-racial jealousies and intrigues, smacked of liberation, and contained more than a suspicion of involving a twentieth century crusade. Left as such, it would have done little harm, especially if the Powers had chosen to make good their promises by the application of Art. XXIII. But since the Powers from financial motives of their own were reluctant to put any pressure on the Porte, and since no individual Government inspired by quixotic ideas was willing to prejudice its own interests or the hope of future concessions by taking the initiative, the Macedonian question dragged on and on until it became little else than an European scandal. Before events had reached such a

head, however, the Peninsula was engaged in another war. In 1897 the Greek Government was forced by public opinion to declare war on Turkey, the state of affairs in Macedonia and Crete affording the necessary motive. The result of that war was the lamentable débâcle of an army which was totally unprepared and unequipped for such an emergency. The only result was a slight rectification in the Thessalian frontier. The Macedonian problem was as far off solution as ever.

Throughout Abdul Hamid's life his policy in dealing with statesmen and diplomatists might be described as an application of the *divide et impera* rule or of the Jesuitic system of duality. He showed consummate skill in playing off the ambassadors against each other; and he was content to foster discord between any of the Balkan States. We have a specimen of his work on these lines in the incident of Stamboloff over Trikoupi's confederation. Having thoroughly beaten Greece in the '97 war, he was now inclined to cast a favourable idea on Hellenic aspirations, especially when they clashed with Bulgarian, for with his unerring instinct he could not fail to notice the remarkable progress made by that country. And in this way the first impulse was given to the Greek campaign of proselytism and terrorism in the vilayets of Monastir, Kossovo, Salonika and Adrianople,

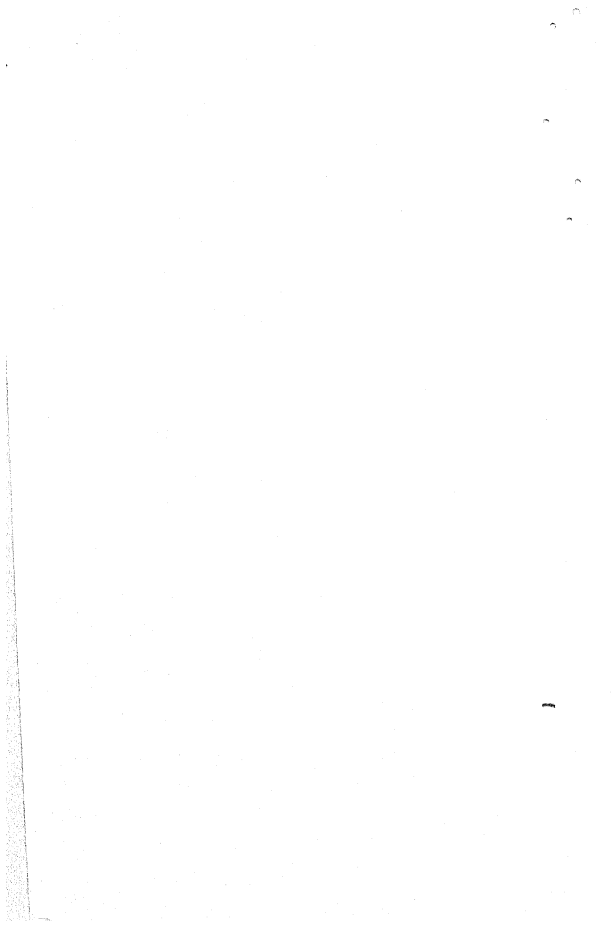


which must remain as an indelible disgrace in Greek history, and which to the lasting dishonour of Turkey was aided and abetted or at least allowed to continue by Ottoman officials. Into the details of the years of insurrection up to 1902 there is no need to go. It is sufficient for the purpose of this brief sketch to say that the trouble reached such alarming proportions that the Great Powers were compelled, however reluctantly, to intervene. The momentary pricking of conscience did little, until Lansdowne appeared with a programme<sup>1</sup> of reforms. So definite were the British proposals, so timely were they in their arrival, that they had to be reckoned with, although it was extremely irksome to Austria and Russia, who in 1897 had come to a private agreement, which effectually, come what might, safeguarded their interests as against the smaller countries. The upshot of Lansdowne's reform was the famous Mürzsteg programme, which definitely introduced the foreign gendarmerie and at the same time foreshadowed the ultimate division

<sup>1</sup> Briefly stated, his proposals in a dispatch dated September 29, 1903, aimed at : (1) Nomination of a Christian Governor, or maintenance of a Mussulman Governor, assisted by European assessors. (2) Nomination of European officers to reform the gendarmerie. (3) Withdrawal of all bashi-bazouks from Macedonia. (4) Each Power to send six officers to accompany the Ottoman troops so as to exercise a restraining influence and obtain reliable information. (5) Distribution of relief.



M. Passitch, Servian Prime Minister.



according to spheres or zones of influence. Nothing more disastrous could have been evolved if it had been the sworn vow of the Powers to exterminate the different races. At once each rival nation busied itself with the creation of bands who were to go forth into Macedonia and be the apostles of their respective religions and nationalities. Serb, Greek, Bulgar, Albanian sought to extend his spheres of interest, and even Roumania suddenly discovered kinship with the Koutzo-Vlachs and found it necessary to protect their existence. But the most bitter struggle was that waged between Greek and Bulgar. Between Exarchate and Patriarchate there was a greater gulf than between Orthodoxy and Romanism. And in this cruel war the hand of the Turk was against the Bulgar; to the misdeeds of the Greek bands the Ottoman authorities were only too willing to turn a blind eye, for in the simple virility of the Bulgarian race both Turks and Greeks saw the future danger. Nothing was said when bishops<sup>1</sup> and even Greek

<sup>1</sup> On October, 1905, the Greek Archbishop of Florina accompanied by comitadjis made a circuit of the Vlach communities of the Meglen and caused the devastation of all Vlach churches.

With the purpose of exciting the hatred of the Greeks against the Bulgarians, the Greek consulate at Adrianop<sup>l</sup> distributed Greek newspapers with appeals to rise again

consuls in Macedonia or Thrace lent open assistance to the comitadjis, but a swift and summary vengeance fell on the suspected "notable" or "intellectual" who was so unlucky as to bear a Bulgarian name.

On August 20, 1905, about seven o'clock in the evening, the Greek Kani Deroff was killed at *Vodena* by a revolver-shot from one Michael Cotzoff. A profound enmity reigned between these two men, and this crime had nothing to do with politics. Nevertheless, next day, on the application of the Greek bishop, the whole Bulgarian quarter was surrounded. The bishop, accompanied by several Greek sympathizers and a large number of police agents, put at his disposal by the Ottoman authorities, caused searches to be made in all the houses, under pretext of looking for the murderer. The Bulgarians were threatened by the bishop with the worst reprisals. A number of them were their enemies. Here is a specimen from a paper published in *Volo*, Oct. 17, 1904, No. 17.

After having said that the reforms of Mürzsteg are the only obstacle to Turkey's extermination of the "Bulgarian bandits," and after having mourned the fate of eight hundred thousand Greeks left to the mercy of the "greatest assassins and bandits"—the Bulgarians—it says :

Let us put aside prayers and overtures ; all our energy should be concentrated on vengeance ; blood must be shed. Thus shall we aid Turkey, whose great desire is to exterminate all these scoundrels of Bulgarians.

maltreated, and a Kaimakan caused the young wife of Panko Tufektchi to be stripped naked in the presence of the bishop. The murderer not having been found, his brother and his employer were arrested in his place.

The foreign gendarmerie were powerless. Brigandage and kidnapping were rampant. Men were even spirited away from the centre of Salonika. It was obvious that once more the Powers would have to move; there was even a talk of bringing down Art. XXIII from its dusty shelf, where it had been thrown with a lot of useless diplomatic lumber, when suddenly the world was started by the news of the Young Turk insurrection of July, 1908. The *coup d'état* of Enver and Niazi Beys was hailed by the Powers as the outward sign of Turkey's regeneration. Macedonia was likened unto a second land of promise, flowing with milk and honey. The sinister presence of Abdul Hamid, however, prevented anything being done. The next few months were spent in intrigues and conspiracies. Finally in April, 1909, came the Sultan's final throw for power, which collapsed before Mahmud Shevket's march on the capital. Greeks and Bulgarians joined with Mohammedans on that march; and the Constitution which had been suppressed or "suspended" since the days of Midhat was revived.

Optimists at once prophesied the end of the Balkan Question. Like Art. XXIII, the Mürzsteg Programme and the Reval Conversation, Constitutionalism in its turn was hailed as the great cure. But six months had hardly elapsed before once more the Balkan Problem had flashed before the world in a new light, and for a few hours Europe was on the verge of its Armageddon. Austria-Hungary declared the formal annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while Bulgaria shook off all remaining ties of vassalage and proclaimed itself a free and independent kingdom under the rule of Tsar Ferdinand I. Morality made an outcry and pointed out the wickedness of adding to the difficulties of the nation which was making such an effort at reformation. Russia heaved its vast bulk in protest. England referred to the sanctity of international agreements, to the cold-blooded callousness which had torn up the Treaty of Berlin. Greece was speechless with rage.<sup>1</sup> But morality was weak. The Emperor in his shining armour rattled his sword in the scabbard; and once again the wicked flourished, and it was evident that the

<sup>1</sup> Greece had been prevented from declaring her union with Crete by the reminder that any move on her part would only stimulate Bulgaria. Her disgust at Bulgaria taking this step and thus stealing a march was indescribable.

problem had obtained a new lease of life, during which it might engulf Europe in ruin.

In a few months it was plain that Constitutionalism as a panacea was going to have precisely as much effect in Macedonia as its predecessors. The young Turk régime was proving as iniquitous, if not indeed more so, than that of the old Sultan; and there were ominous signs that a certain body known as the Revolutionary Committee was renewing its activity. The policy carried on by this body was one of the most diabolical that had been yet invented throughout the bloodstained history of this question. A group of enthusiasts had noticed how easily sympathy was aroused once "massacres" were mentioned, and they at once set to work to see how they could encourage massacres, and they discovered that the most effective way of doing this was to put bombs in the midst of a Mohammedan crowd in some remote village, on a market day for preference. The bomb would explode and kill perhaps three or four persons; it was whispered that this was the work of Bulgarians, and the incensed crowd would see red and massacre every Bulgarian on whom it could lay hands. It was then easy enough to say that the bomb was the work of the Young Turks, while there could be no dispute as to who had committed the subsequent massacres.

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Once more Art. XXIII was referred to with bated breath, but in the meantime it was obvious to that limited inner circle of men who really knew the Balkans that a great change was gradually coming over the relations which had previously existed between the states. Outside influences had been at work. The alliance for the final expulsion of Turk from Europe, which had been the dream of Trikoupis, was now on the eve of realization, and in the evolution, or if you will "*bouleversement*," of events which can be traced throughout history, it was now the once-despised Bulgaria who broached the scheme and headed the plan. The Tripolitan campaign enabled them to discuss the idea without exciting over-inquisitive comment from Turkey, which was busied not only in Africa, but in Albania and Arabia as well. That this new pressure on Turkey facilitated the plans of this new ill-assorted confederation cannot be denied, but whether it actually hastened the first signature between any of the parties cannot be proved. From the disgust of the allies at Italy's signature to the treaty during the mobilization crisis, it would seem not improbable that they had relied on her. At any rate in April 1912 Greece and Bulgaria signed a contract which compelled the countries to come to each other's support in case of attack from an outside enemy, which forced Greece

to act as an ally of Bulgaria, supposing the latter took the offensive, and provided for the ratification of similar contracts between all the Balkan States and for the division of Turkey's European States between the allies in case of a successful war. Stamboloff's reluctance to join the old scheme of a previous generation was justified. Bulgaria was now the acknowledged leader of the Balkan Peninsula.

The various phases of the mysterious question in its new development will be seen in the following pages. To give the allies their due, they did not plunge into war at once to seek their ends. They demanded the application of efficient and practical reforms in Macedonia. They asked, in fact, that the Powers should fulfil their pledges of over three decades back in the shape of Art. XXIII. Failing this, they had resolved among themselves to trust the Powers no longer, but to enforce their claims by war. Once again, to their lasting discredit, the Powers procrastinated, the secret military preparations of the allies led to a counter-move on the part of the Porte, and war was the result.

Whatever one's sympathies may be, whether rabidly pro-Turk, or fiercely pro-Balkan, it is impossible to deny that for upwards of twenty years Macedonia, which has gradually become the pivot of the Balkan Question, has been shockingly mis-

governed. For this, of course, the Porte must bear a large share of the blame, but in equity the Great Powers are the guilty parties. From sordid motives and from petty jealousies they have deliberately postponed the application of reforms which they themselves had guaranteed. They have evoked, one might almost say encouraged, the worst passions of mankind, and have in consequence reaped an harvest of murder, pillage, rapine, massacres and religious persecution which is almost without parallel in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the eyes of a vast number of presumably fair-minded people, who are, however, completely ignorant of the circumstances, the Ottoman administration is solely responsible for this work. Undeniably by sloth, negligence and corruption Turkey is to blame for a consistent refusal to introduce thorough and practical reforms; but the diplomatists and foreign ministers of every European Power are equally branded with the same dishonour. They have deliberately broken their promises, and steadfastly combined against applying the pressure which was so easy, and the Balkan States can at least be congratulated on having destroyed and torn to shreds in a few weeks the rottenest fabric ever woven by European statesmanship.

## CHAPTER II

### COUNT BERCHTOLD'S PROPOSALS

THERE can scarcely exist any visitor to Sofia who does not know of the Union Club, that polyglot cosmopolitan "*cercle*" which throws open its hospitable doors to diplomats, travellers, foreign bankers and journalists, whose very history indeed seems interwoven with that of Bulgaria. Ministerial decisions, cabinet changes, political intrigues have all taken shape within its walls ; while it was from the very steps of the club that M. Stamboloff, the greatest statesman whom Bulgaria ever produced, took the hired carriage which drove him down the fatal street to meet the revolvers and yataghans of his assassins. Proudly believing that its existence is as necessary to the kingdom as the Sobranje itself, it is obvious that such a Club allows no utterance of a foreign statesman, no article in a great Continental journal, dealing with the condition, interests or future of the Balkan peninsula, can pass the lynx-eyed politicians of its smoking-room uncriticized. Should the utterance

or article in question emanate from Austria, whose aims and methods in Bulgarian eyes could only be paralleled by Mephistopheles' dealings with Faust, the interest is tenfold. And so, by some form of mental arithmetic, one can understand why on a certain sunny morning in August, 1912, the reading-room of the Union Club resembled an international debating-room rather than an apartment furnished with comfortable armchairs for the peaceful digestion of journals. The proposals of Count Berchtold, the Austro-Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs, with regard to the institution of reforms in European Turkey, had just been communicated, and were to be found among the official telegraphs published two or three times a day by the Balkan Agency.

Some one has said that every man's smallest and most trivial action will effect a host of people unknown and unthought of, just as a pebble thrown into a pond will cause a succession of ripples ever widening and expanding until they reach the banks: and it was one of the smallest and most insignificant of the ripples caused by the stone flung by Count Berchtold into the Balkan pond that forced the writer of these events to remain in Sofia for a longer period than had been intended, and there watch results.

No more opportune moment for submitting a

reasonable and impartial scheme which would definitely ensure a permanent settlement of the Macedonian, or rather Balkan, problem could be imagined. Earlier in August Bulgaria had been ablaze with indignation over the appalling massacre which had taken place in Kotchana ; and although signs were not wanting to show that the two bomb explosions in the market which had preceded and probably caused the rising among the Moslems were the work of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Committee, whose chiefs with a diabolical knowledge of inter-racial passions had calculated only too surely that in this way Mahommedan fanaticism and desire for vengeance would be aroused, the great majority of the Bulgarian people firmly believed that it was the leaders of the Young Turk Committee who had inspired this sinister outrage. For a short time it seemed as if the twenty-fifth anniversary of King Ferdinand's arrival in Bulgaria, which was being celebrated with great pomp in the historic town of Tirnovo, would be marred if not, indeed, indefinitely postponed by the consequences and remembrance of this incident.

Fortunately, however, the past associations of Tirnovo, the historic capital of the old Bulgarian empire, combined with an honest though tardy realization of the vast progress which the country had made under their rules in these twenty-five

years prevented the fêtes from being the fiasco once threatened, although on the very evening before the citizens of Sofia had been parading their trim streets with black flags and other signs of mourning. The war clouds which had temporarily darkened the horizon melted away, and for a moment it seemed as if the alarmists, who had been prophesying war with parrot-like persistency since the "melting of the snows"—to use their own favourite expression—would be permanently quieted.

Upon this peaceful *mise en scène* a few days later the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister's proposals burst like a bombshell. The warm and enthusiastic reception which they were accorded in diplomatic circles and in the Continental press is recent history; and it was left to the *Times*, alone of English papers, to describe in one pithy sentence the exact tone of Bulgarian opinion, and to describe the general displeasure. "The phrase 'progressive decentralization,' portentous enough on paper, fails to satisfy the essentially practical mind of Bulgaria." These few words put the case in a nutshell. While the majority of Continental journals, inspired or otherwise, were hailing Count Berchtold as the fairy godfather of the Balkans, the Bulgarians were dissecting and analysing the exact meaning of these proposals in their own pecu-

liar, efficient and remorseless manner. And the results of their labour led them to express formally the gravest disapproval. It will be remembered that among other points Count Berchtold suggested that the reforms granted by the Sultan to Albania should be extended to Macedonia. Externally such a proposition seemed reasonable enough; but it is over just such a point that the logic of Bulgaria, based as it is on cold fact and not on empiric generalities, becomes so irresistible. Her first question exposed the hopelessness of expecting the panacea to be hidden beneath the verbiage of these proposals. Nothing could have been simpler than this question, which was purely geographical. What was actually meant by "Albania"? Bulgaria pointed out that the geographical area known as Albania on European maps does not exist as far as the Sublime Porte is concerned. Turkey merely recognized seven vilayets in European Turkey, and the extension of educational and linguistic concessions to one of those vilayets afforded no basis of comparison for similar concessions in the part known by Bulgaria as Macedonia, where some five or six different nationalities are striving for individual recognition.

As against this vague nebulous policy Bulgaria had resolutely determined on obtaining the one régime which could ensure the permanent pacifica-



tion of the Turkish provinces in Europe and of the establishment of a régime of order, liberty and progress. Nor could it be said that this determination had been kept secret, since a mass meeting of delegates from every guild and charitable society in Macedonia voted the schedule of reforms necessary in Macedonia only two Sundays after the first publication of the Austrian proposals. These reforms were divided into four clauses—the appointment of a foreign Governor-General, administrative autonomy, national gendarmerie, and free education. And the importance of this congress, which was regarded by the Continental press as a mere collection of local and parochial windbags, is proved by the inclusion of all four demands in the Collective Note which the Confederate States presented to the Sublime Porte on the Sunday preceding the declaration of war two months later.

It was in connexion with this congress and with similar resolutions that Europe committed one of many blunders. The Great Powers chose to believe that the Macedonian delegates, or any resolution which they liked to pass, were merely an outward and visible manifestation of what the Americans would call "hot air." For political purposes a Government uncertain of its majority might perhaps find it convenient to simulate a little interest in the doings of the congress, just as in

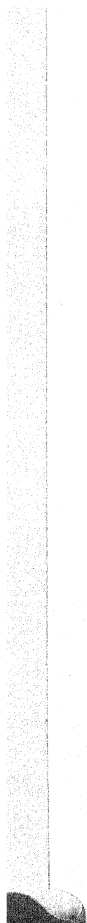
England a petition sometimes finds favour on the eve of a bye-election; but that a meeting composed of 200 or 300 Macedonian ushers and yokels could affect international politics was unthinkable. Such was Europe's argument. As a matter of fact the Macedonian Committees were a powerful factor in Bulgarian policy, and in a later chapter it will be seen that they played no mean part in the events preceding the final decision between peace and war. The influence of the Revolutionary Committee, which could at any moment during the latter part of August or in September have brought about a repetition of the Kotchana massacre, had not the pursuance of a certain policy kept its hand idle, is sufficient proof of what a small group of men, who are convinced that the attainment of the end justifies all means, can accomplish in a State where Constitutional government is not yet defined by a Median code of what is or what is not the thing. It is the unwritten law, which is yet more inflexible than the Statute Book, that cramps genius and has made a Gunpowder Plot almost impossible in staid twentieth century England. The Merest glance at any Blue Book of South-Eastern Europe for 1906 or 1907 would have reminded the Powers of the sinister rôle played by the Revolutionary Committee after the Mürzsteg programme of unhappy memory, and it

is indeed surprising to any one who has been vouchsafed a peep behind the scenes that the diplomatists in Sofia, who were fully aware of the identity of the organizers of this meeting in the Slavianska Beseda, could have overlooked the real purport of these demonstrations. MM. Protogeroff and Vladoff had always shown that they preferred action to speech-making, though they fully realized that the latter was often a necessary prelude to the former.

Neither can it be said that the Bulgarian Government concealed its distrust of the Austrian proposals of "progressive decentralization." No secret was made of their disapproval, but after expressing their feelings (and full prominence was given to this expression in the newspapers) they were content to await some more explicit statement. Such a statement, however, was never forthcoming, and the vagueness and mystery which shrouded the exact nature of Count Berchtold's scheme was naturally very galling to a young people which had so far played the diplomatic game in a sportsmanlike way. The Austrian Minister in Sofia disclaimed any knowledge, while inquiries at Constantinople were equally fruitless, and so while conversations were being held in Paris, Berlin and St. Petersburg, Bulgaria was left in complete ignorance of discussions which would have the most far-



King Peter.



reaching results on their co-nationalists in Macedonia as well as on their own future.

It was generally felt that Austria had not made this move without some good reason of her own. Her pretensions to the Sandjak were a constant menace, and it was hoped that the Powers, but above all England in particular, would realize from a political point of view the value of maintaining a strong and unfettered Bulgaria as a check to Austrian expansion and Russian ambition. Stolid and unemotional as the Bulgarians are, they seldom forgive an injury and never forget a friend. The intervention of Sir William White at the time of the annexation of Eastern Roumelia is remembered to-day with the liveliest gratitude; and it was the recollection of this support, tendered at a moment when Bulgaria knew herself deserted even by Russia, that made the nation look towards England as the one Power that would realize the true nature of the country's aspirations. Bulgaria understood, as fully as the most rabid Germanophile in England, the grave dangers of Teutonic aggression. She felt that this common menace might forge a new bond of sympathy between the two Governments. Genuine British support would find its recompense in the existence of a powerful army of 350,000 men in the Near East, ready to fight for their own political liberty or to side with

an ally who had already befriended them in a previous crisis. Accordingly the Bulgarians contented themselves with an outspoken disavowal of any belief in the value of the Austrian avowals, and settled down to await in patience the outcome of the Balmoral conversations and the moment when Count Berchtold would be obliged to outline before the Austrian Parliament his real intention by his suggestion of "progressive decentralization." And during this period of expectancy the national feeling would be best summarized in a few words by the hackneyed quotation, "*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*," for although a few optimists interpreted this sensational speech as the first attempt of the new Minister to justify his selection by *Æhrenthal* and to prove his right to be ranked as a worthy of *Andrassy*, the majority understood that it was little else than a sop thrown to Bulgaria in return for her recognition of Austria's predominance in Albania.

## CHAPTER III

### THE INTERLUDE BEFORE THE CRISIS

AUGUST dragged along quietly enough into September ; and as far as Bulgaria was concerned there was no change in the political situation. Rumours, however, grew more frequent as to a Cabinet crisis in Servia. The intervention of Austria monopolized European attention. From every capital intelligence was received that Count Berchtold's initiative was being favourably considered, while Bulgaria's plea for a wider recognition of the interests of her co-nationalists in Macedonia was politely ignored. It became evident, therefore, that Bulgaria need expect little from Europe, and that even the British Government was unwilling or unable to realize the gravity of the situation, although on every possible occasion the necessity of restraining the more bellicose spirits was impressed upon M. Gueschoff's Cabinet by the representatives of the Great Powers. To shift the onus of responsibility on another person's shoulders is always satisfactory, but in doing so it



is only fair to see that the burden is not too heavy; and the complete ignorance of the outer world as regards Bulgarian internal politics prevented Europe from appreciating the full difficulties of the task which faced M. Gueschoff and his colleagues.

It would be tedious to retrace at length the divers causes which combined to hamper M. Gueschoff in his rôle as pacificator, but it will be readily understood that the assassination of M. Stamboloff and of his able lieutenant M. Petkoff had only embittered the fierce party jealousies and rivalries. No quarter was given or expected, and so when some irregularities were discovered in the accounts of General Savoff, who was in charge of the War Office in a Stamboloffist Ministry, the Opposition had no difficulty in throwing out their enemies and impeaching five or six of the Ministers concerned. Now it was common property that the impeachment was little else than a political move, though a clever and successful one, since Savoff had at most been guilty of a splendid indiscretion. At the time when the Macedonian bands were in full operation and war between Bulgaria and Greece seemed imminent at any moment, Savoff was face to face with the unpleasant discovery that the army was so ill-equipped that to take the field would be but to court disaster. He thereupon hastily set to work, and regardless of expense

placed it on a sound footing. But, in order to ensure the necessary secrecy, he refused to pass his accounts before any auditor—and it was this patriotic irregularity which was distorted by the Opposition to effect his downfall. The additional fact that he was personally unpopular with King Ferdinand facilitated the plot and ensured his absence from the political arena for some time. The group which had won its way to power had no desire to bring the matter to open trial too hastily, and in a year or two they were displaced by another party, which had some pet legislation of its own to discuss. And so for several years Savoff and his colleagues remained in the wilderness of Opposition with no chance to clear themselves. The impeachment was perpetually postponed, and in revenge the Stamboloffists, who could always appeal to several popular watchwords, proceeded to make things difficult for the Government by joining more or less openly with the more militant spirits, who daily demanded war and accused the Government of sacrificing the interests of the nation to the caprices of the King.

The general dissatisfaction at the tenor of Count Berchtold's proposal very naturally afforded the malcontents a magnificent chance of redoubling these delicate attentions. The officers to a man wanted war, and, since they judged Savoff's pre-

vious action by its military value rather than by its political irregularity, lost no time in declaring that he, their finest general and organizer, had already paid too high a penalty for what was after all a great service to the state. They pointed out that the high state of perfection, to which the Bulgarian army had been brought, was the result of his determination, and definitely announced that they would follow no leader but him.

Under such circumstances one can imagine how irritating it was for M. Gueschoff to be told by the European Powers that at any cost he must keep the more unruly elements in check. As a Bulgarian patriot he saw to the uttermost the futility of entrusting the interests of their co-nationalists across the border to Austria, he realized that the Bulgarians must carve out their destiny by themselves with little or no assistance from Europe, while he also understood that for the moment it would be futile to enter upon a serious struggle without the assistance of their allies, who were for the moment unprepared. Meanwhile, however, the hotheads might at any moment decide to egg on the Revolutionary Committee towards the execution of a bomb outrage, which would incite the already inflamed populace to demand war at any cost. The Cabinet was in a dilemma, and, after careful consideration, chose the only wise course possible.

The leaders of the Committee were taken into the Government confidence, on the understanding that for some weeks no attempt should be made to disturb the peace.

The existence of the Balkan Confederation and the proof that the Government was as fully set on securing definite reforms in Macedonia, whether by diplomacy or war, satisfied even the most ardent members of the Committee, and from that date military preparations proceeded apace, without any comment appearing in the Sofia Press. Residents returning peacefully to their homes at midnight or in the early hours of the morning would see two or three field guns rolling peacefully through the streets; on one occasion two siege guns rumbled past the house of a foreign Consul with a hideous clatter, while travellers from Philippopolis reported numbers of trains laden with material and ammunition running eastwards. Any inquiry as to the reason of these preparations was met by a smile and some ready reference to the manœuvres, and it was only some hours later that the inquisitive one would remember that the manœuvres were being held at Shumla, and that it seemed an unnecessary waste of time and energy to forward material to Philippopolis if it was really to be used so far to the north.

At the same time the Committee urged the

Government to make use of the large number of Macedonian immigrants who had crossed the frontier and settled in Bulgaria. Only a small proportion of these had taken out naturalization papers, and so were already drafted into the army; and it was decided to utilize some of the old reserve officers to drill the more able-bodied remainder in quiet out-of-the-way districts. Of rifles the country had enough and to spare, so that at the outbreak of war it would be comparatively simple not only to equip a division recruited from these irregulars, but also a number of bands of irregulars, who would be of the greatest service in blowing up bridges, blockhouses, and generally harassing the lines of communications much as the *franc-tireurs* did in 1870. But there were two serious deficiencies, money and horses. As regards the former, the Minister of Finance, M. Theodoroff, was busily engaged in trying to float a loan of 180,000,000 francs in Paris, and during the early days of September the realization of the loan seemed certain. It was only when the first intimation of the real purpose of Bulgaria reached the ears of the diplomatists in Sofia, that under pressure from the French government, the financiers, to whom application had been made, refused a sou, although the amount for which application was made was reduced to 3,000,000. As regards horses, the shortage was

far too serious to be remedied in a few weeks, despite the efforts to import a certain number; and, as events proved later, when both in Servia and Bulgaria the armies were compelled to have recourse to oxen in place of horses for transport purposes, this lack of foresight led to an appreciable delay in the rapidity of mobilization. Every Englishman who has had experience of oxen in India knows that they must be allowed to graze in the day time and sleep at night. A few hours in the early morning and a couple in the evening constitutes the limit of their working powers.

For the moment, however, the Bulgarian Government was content to try pacific means, for the attainment of Macedonian reforms although it was agreed that no pains should be spared to bring the army to the highest pitch of efficiency. In the meantime Count Berchtold's appearance in the Austrian Diet was anxiously awaited, and a statement or series of counter-proposals was formulated and drawn up in consequence of an exchange of ideas between Bulgaria, Greece, Servia and Montenegro. It was decided that should the Powers display no readiness to force the concession of these reforms upon the Porte, that the allied Governments would then present a joint note, which would in essence be tantamount to an ultimatum. On Turkey's response to these demands

would rest the question of peace or war. It was palpable that some weeks would inevitably elapse before these delicate international negotiations could show any definite result; but it was hoped that a final decision could be arrived at by the time the Sobranye reopened for its session at the end of October. This delay, however, served a useful purpose. The more martial chauvinists expressed their willingness to abide by the issue of the negotiations. They ceased clamouring for war. The newspapers lowered their tone, and the Minister of Agriculture sent round a circular note to the peasants, bidding them resume their harvest work, since there was no possibility of any grave trouble in the immediate future. A perceptible lull made itself felt, and all save those who were possessed of inside knowledge thought that the crisis had been postponed until next spring. Interest was mainly centred on the approaching manœuvres.

The immense value of holding general manœuvres on a moderately large scale, when it is well within the bounds of possibility that the army will have to take the field in real earnest within a few weeks, can easily be appreciated. It is a piece of good fortune that rarely happens to a nation. The main object of the manœuvres was to test the efficiency of the railway organization and the

capability of some of the younger generals in handling large bodies of troops ; while other details such as sanitary arrangements, the value of the portable field oven for bread and the strategic possibilities of the aeroplane were closely watched. The interest of the public centred rather on the objective of the invading army, since the theme of the manœuvres was an attack on Shumla, which has borne the proud title of the " Virgin Fortress " from the time when the Bulgarians first occupied the country.

The Bulgarian railways have been constructed first and foremost with a view to their strategical utility, and the remoteness of Shumla from the main centres of concentration increased the difficulty of the task set those who were responsible for the handling of the railways. They were required to concentrate on the west of the Shumla plateau 54,000 men from five different centres with all necessary transport materials, within forty-eight hours from the order of mobilization. At the end of the operations, which lasted three days, a similar period was allowed for demobilization. Admittedly, manœuvres cannot be expected to produce the realities of warfare. The machinery runs more smoothly ; unexpected obstacles are less persistent in putting in an unwelcome appearance, but for all that it was generally considered



that the very magnitude of the task afforded a practical test, which would try the abilities of the General Staff to the utmost.

The actual course of the operations has little interest. It is sufficient to state that the health of the troops was excellent, and that the ordinary tactics were well carried out: the reconnaissance work was good and the lines of communications were adequately protected. But it was the railway department which afforded such a striking contrast to what came later. Owing to the existence of a triangular line of railway, the apex of which was formed by Rustchuk, the bases by Kaspitchan and Orechovitz, the trains were kept running in one direction until they had unloaded their men to the south of Shumla, when they pushed on as empties to complete the round so as to be in readiness. Such a condition of affairs in real warfare could of course be only made possible by the successful occupation of the whole country, which would imply that the entire Bulgarian army was defeated and intended to keep at bay on the plateau. Such considerations, however, carried no weight in view of the real aim of the manoeuvres. In this respect the railway organization was claimed to have scored a complete success, and it was officially stated that during the work of demobilization no less than sixteen trains were run off in nine

hours. Such a triumph affords a marked contrast to what actually occurred three weeks later, as will be seen, when the Bulgarians were called upon to mobilize their army at full strength within the eighteenth day, which they gave out as their limit.

With the close of the manœuvres, excitement once more died down, but gradually among the more intelligent there grew the conviction that everything was not as it seemed. An uneasy belief was abroad that some of the troops who had been summoned to the manœuvres had not been disbanded, while it was known that one class of reservists had been called out for three weeks' drill. The military trains for Philippopolis rolled on as systematically as ever, and signs were not wanting that Bulgaria was determined to gain her ends by force should diplomacy prove insufficient. In other words, the foreign element was beginning to smell war. Yet despite a growing feeling of uneasiness, the pacific assurances were redoubled. The formation of the new Cabinet in Servia under M. Paschich only tended to confirm the optimists, since it was well known that although not a pronounced Turcophile like M. Milovanovitch, who had died early in the year, M. Paschich was not likely to be led into rash and chauvinistic measures. The Bulgarian Premier's family left for abroad : and it was stated that he himself would join them

later. Outwardly at least the future never looked so hopeful, and there is no doubt that the Powers were misled by this appearance. The only rift within the lute was the intelligence that France had finally refused to float any loan whatsoever. It proved at least that the world of financiers was uneasy, however lightly the *corps diplomatique* might choose to construe the situation.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE OUTBREAK OF THE CRISIS

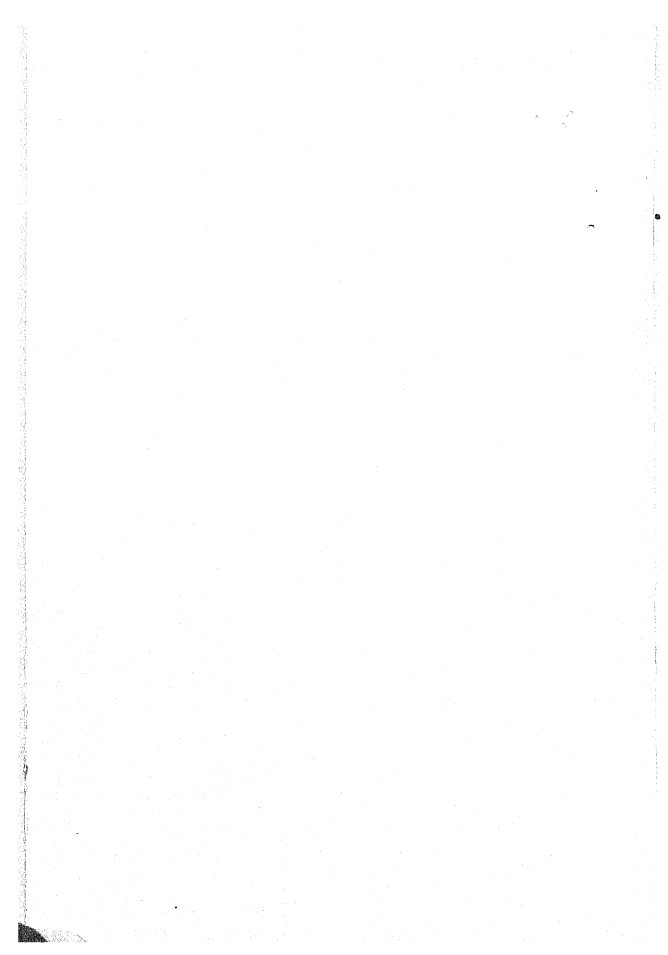
THE lull was destined to be broken rudely, while the visionaries who had viewed the outlook with such serene calm found their hopes suddenly dispelled. The crisis was precipitated by two events, the speech of Count Berchtold to the Austro-Hungarian delegates and the sudden decision of the Turks to hold grand manœuvres in the vilayet of Adrianople. The Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister's reference to the *sol brûlant*, which could only be interpreted as meaning the Sandjak of Novibazar, and his statement that the interests of the Dual monarchy were at stake (*en jeu*) created the utmost apprehension in political circles. Diplomats and correspondents in Sofia were asked on all sides to furnish some explanation of these phrases, until even this excitement paled before the news of the Adrianople manœuvres, which were accompanied by the sinister intelligence that the Turks, alarmed at the warlike preparations of the Balkan States, had

held up thirty wagons loaded with cannon and ammunition which were destined for Servia. No time was lost by the Bulgarian Government in demanding an explanation from the Sublime Porte for the reason of their sudden concentration of troops, and the reply of Nouradunghian, the Foreign Minister, is worth recording. He said that just as a certain body of chauvinists in Bulgaria were clamouring for war, so the Turks were faced with an equal number of enthusiasts who considered that it was derogatory to the dignity of a Great Power to listen to the demands of the Balkan States. The presence of a number of Turkish troops in the Adrianople vilayet would satisfy their outcry, while the Bulgarians might be induced to abate their provocative attitude if they realized that Turkey was not unprepared. Therefore the decision of the Sublime Porte would only assist M. Gueschoff in his desire to maintain peace.

The substance of this reply, however casuistic it may be deemed, showed that Turkey fully understood the situation. The secret preparations of her allies had not escaped the vigilance of the Porte. The decision to hold manœuvres was her only possible reply, short of an actual declaration of war, and politically and strategically it was a sound move. It forced the enemy to show their hand.



Crown Prince Alexander of Serbia.



A day or two passed without any aggravation of the crisis, and in company with two European officers I decided to pay a visit to the frontier in order to see what impression a comparison of the troops stationed in the blockhouses might make upon us. One of my companions was a railway expert, and since war would inevitably necessitate a concentration of troops at Kustendil, or rather Gijesevo, the south-western terminus, which was our objective, he was desirous of examining how the construction of the line lent itself to the rapid transportation of troops.

Our reception at the Bulgarian blockhouse, half an hour's walk from the station, was wonderful, for few people excel the Bulgarians in hospitality. The troops were in good condition, smart and orderly in their bearing, but one could not forget that strategically the Turkish blockhouse, which was a few hundred yards away, commanded the Bulgarian position; and after drinking a glass of wine with the lieutenant, we moved on to examine the condition of the Turkish contingent. Recollections of what I had seen four years before when travelling along the frontier reminded me what scarecrows the men had usually been in appearance, since a frontier outpost seemed to be the fate of all the toothless and decrepit wrecks of officers. The first glance showed me what an



improvement the German régime had wrought in the army, and I realized what a grim encounter would be the result of war between the two countries unless efficiency had been sacrificed to appearance. The Bulgarian officer below had said, "We will fight *na nos* (to the knife)," and as I saw the neat file of Turkish soldiers, headed by a smart lieutenant, I wondered what the outcome would be. My companions were loud in praises of the Turkish privates, but the railway expert remarked as we rolled back in the train that the Bulgarians would have need of the strictest care in mobilizing on this line, as it would be comparatively simple to cause a disastrous block. After events proved the justice of this judgment.

This pleasant interlude proved to be the last, since once back in Sofia it was apparent that we were on the eve of big things, and on Saturday, September 29, was held a Cabinet Meeting, which was destined to alter the whole situation. Probably few more dramatic deliberations have been known in history. Like that fateful council-of-war before the battle of Marathon, the Ministers were divided between peace and war. The Minister of War and the Chief of the Staff, Generals Nikiphoroff and Fitcheff, reported that the army was unready, whereupon the Minister of Finance, M. Theodoroff, who had throughout advocated

the adoption of extreme measures, said that for his part he would believe no such statement until he heard it straight from the lips of General Savoff. The latter was accordingly summoned, and declared that the army was never more fit in its history and that the officers and men were unanimous in their desire for war. M. Theodoroff at once kissed General Savoff on both cheeks and exclaimed, "I, for one, will hear of nothing but war." His enthusiasm won over the waverers and the decision of the Cabinet was communicated to the King, who summoned Savoff the same evening to a private conference, which lasted no less than four hours. The outcome was that Ferdinand expressed his willingness to abide by the decision of his Ministers: furthermore, in deference to the wishes of the army, he personally assured Savoff that he would delegate to him the position and responsibilities of generalissimo. It was a great triumph for the ex-Minister, since it meant the abandonment of the impeachment and the reinstatement of his discredited comrades. Once again it was left to the Stamboloffist party to save the nation from the fatal error of indecision.

On Monday, September 30, the order for general mobilization was signed, and the same evening it was known that Servia and Greece had followed the example of the senior partner in the Balkan

League. Moreover, during the night two Servian regiments of cavalry which had the same evening been entrained at Belgrade passed through Servia and went down the line to Kustendil, from where they branched off to guard the Bulgarian frontier on the south-east. It was an outward token of Servian and Bulgarian unanimity. In Montenegro such an order was superfluous, since the inhabitants of the Black Mountains practically live in a perennial state of border warfare. For the first time Europe was vouchsafed the visible proof of the solidity of the Balkan States, yet it was some days before the Great Powers could believe that any step would be taken by the allies without consulting the European Concert, and when diplomacy did at last condescend to move it was too late.

Few foreigners, who were privileged to witness the scenes that followed the order for general mobilization can forget them. From east and west, north and south, there poured into Sofia an endless stream of peasants, some in brown breeches, some in black breeches, many accompanied by their wives carrying some parcel on their heads, many driving a horse, may be a couple, which was requisitioned for the army. It was the call of a nation to arms, the gathering of a European *impi*. For the first few days, as far as civilized

comforts were concerned, we might have been wafted to the Middle Ages. Banks were closed; the newspapers appeared on half-sheets; customers beat in vain on the door of their favourite restaurants; trams ceased running; bakers neglected to prepare their bread; not a cab was to be had for love or money. Indeed, had it not been for the personal intervention of King Ferdinand, who ordered 100 soldiers to keep the furnaces alight at the electric works, the whole town would have been plunged in darkness.

The station, whither I was dragged by the self-constituted railway expert, afforded a memorable spectacle. The place was a seething mass of humanity laden with bundles, Yankee "grips" and parcels of every imaginable size and shape. Strangely enough, no military guard had been placed on the platforms, no one seemed to have been put in charge of the entraining enthusiasts, so that the result was an indescribable chaos. One long train, composed mainly of horse-boxes, was drawn up in which the men were packed like sardines. Others crowded on the roof, some clung to the footboards and to the couplings; but every now and then one could observe an upheaval among the wedge of men who were lucky enough to be inhaling fresh air at the only door, and then a peasant, who had suddenly discovered that he

was bound northwards instead of southwards, would come bounding out like a pebble discharged from a catapult. Travellers who arrived from other parts related the same tale. Every train which entered a station was invaded by a horde of peasants, anxious to gain their mobilization centres. Class distinctions were abolished. The roof, the first-class carriage, the restaurant car, even that holy of holies, the *wagon-lit*, presented no terrors to these war-mad agriculturists. An Austrian officer related with disgust how his privacy had been defiled by no fewer than eight robust garlic-eaters at Philippopolis, so that he was fain to take refuge for the remainder of the journey in the kitchen. The enthusiasm made one stop to think, but one reflected sadly on the absence of discipline. "C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre," whispered the railway expert, who loved Teutonic orderliness. "To-morrow we shall see."

The distribution-centres of uniforms and rifles presented a similar spectacle. Within twenty-four hours of the mobilization order the question that was bandied from one to the other in the streets was, "Where is your uniform?" A frenzied crowd clamoured at each office. No arrangements had been made to cope with the throng or make each man pass up in single file to get his kit.

The enlistment grounds presented a varied multi-coloured sight. Old rifles with yard-long bayonets were stacked round, as if the men were already on bivouac. All about lay rugs and bundles on which some of the peasants were peacefully asleep, while here and there a group squatted round a meagre fire cooking some food.

The self-constituted railway expert passed the whole day at the station, keeping a watchful and critical eye on the speed with which the trains were despatched. It soon became evident that the transport facilities fell far short of the standard which had been set at the manœuvres. On the first day only seven trains were despatched southwards past Kustendil, and as these were sent down on both lines a block occurred at the terminus and it took twenty-four hours for the railway officials to unravel the tangle and clear the lines. Relying on the downward gradient from Sofia to Kustendil the Bulgarians committed a further error in making the trainload too heavy, and since the carriages were not fitted with a pneumatic brake they were courting disaster, supposing a collision was imminent. On the second day a collision actually took place, although it was carefully hushed up; indeed, had it not been for our vigilant inspector, no one would ever have heard a single detail; but we gathered that a long

troop train had got past control and dashed into an up passenger train. Fortunately there was little damage. The *wagon-lit* compartment was slightly hurt, but, as the inspector said, "There were only a few foreigners this time."

Unfortunately, by a curious irony of fate, the amazing success and enthusiasm which attended the first few days subsequent to the general mobilization proved the undoing of the Bulgarian military authorities. The entire scheme was mapped out on paper beforehand by the General Staff, and it was confidently asserted that the army could mobilize in eighteen days. The foreign military attachés, however, put the inside limit at nineteen days, and, as events proved, they were not far wrong in their estimate. The Bulgarian plan was divided into three parts: the concentration into units in certain villages, the movement of these units into divisional headquarters, and the final mobilization of these divisions into the army corps headquarters. For the first of these phases foreign opinion had allowed six days, for the second seven, and for the third six, in all a total of nineteen days. But when one remembers that the Bulgarian army was not ready until the twentieth and twenty-first day there was a natural inclination to ask the reason, especially as the concentration in units was completed in four days

owing to the ready and wonderful response which was made by the Bulgarians. Events proved that it was just this wonderful response which really caused the final delay.

The General Staff made the fatal mistake of departing from their own scheme at the eleventh hour. Relying on the ease with which the preliminary mobilization had taken place, and forgetting that the concentration into divisional headquarters is a far more serious step, which requires the most careful organization and which must inevitably precede the final movement towards army headquarters, the General Staff suddenly decided to omit the intermediate concentration and order the units in the villages to proceed at once to the three army corps centres. The result was the utmost confusion. Groups of men wandered about from place to place without having the least idea how to get to their new destination; local authorities often found themselves in the most serious difficulty when called upon to supply an unexpected detachment with some food. The three days gained at the outset were soon lost, and eventually it was proved by the cold logic of facts that the Bulgarian army was not completely mobilized until the twenty-first day. The same mistake was repeated, with even more disastrous results, in Serbia, where the army



was not fully ready until the twenty-third day. Otherwise, there can be little doubt but that the allies would have flung themselves on Turkey far sooner.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CRISIS IN SERVIA

IT was evident by now that only one issue to this crisis was possible—war. In the meantime it was probable the Powers would at last try to intervene. That, however, would come too late. There was only one additional interesting eventuality—Austria's decision to take an active part in the game. Realizing that one would be more qualified to study the latter problem in Belgrade, I managed to get one of the few remaining cabs and drove down to the garlic-laden atmosphere of Sofia station. It was the same scene of chaotic pandemonium as on my previous visit: one might almost believe that it was the same train waiting to leave, save that a *wagon-lit* carriage had been hitched on. A brisk siege was being waged around the door of this compartment as my traps were shot in; and it was guarded by sundry perspiring foreigners driving off intruders and wearing much the same look of determination as must have been visible on the countenances of Horatius and his two comrades when they held the bridge.

At last, with infinite wheezings and groans, our one engine dragged the long cumbersome train towards the frontier. At every station we slipped one of the trucks loaded with men for their respective mobilization centres, and at every station we had to repel an invasion of struggling, shouting peasants who seemed to consider that our luxurious compartment had been put on for their especial benefit. The journey seemed interminable with its constant stoppages and long delays at every bridge, while on the long gradient up to Dragoman our miserable engine could scarcely pull its load. Indeed at times one could almost fancy that we were slipping back. Little wonder, therefore, that when at length we gained the frontier station at Tzaribrod we were four hours late, although under ordinary circumstances the journey takes less than two hours.

The change on the Servian line, as soon as we reached Pirot, was remarkable. Every platform was guarded by a squad of soldiers, though at first sight, in their new drab kit and queer-shaped caps, one might be excused for mistaking them for a detachment of Dartmoor convicts. However that may be, they served their purpose, for there were no further scenes of disorder, and we passed the rest of the night in comparative comfort.

To one arriving from the clean compactness of

Sofia, bathed in the sunshine of its Indian summer Belgrade on a raw drizzling day seems the acme of dreary discomfort; and no doubt Ovid must have experienced much of the same feeling on reaching the frozen scene of his exile, as the present writer did when stumbling through the ill-kept stony roads up to his hotel.

As far as external experience went, business seemed certainly less dislocated than in Sofia. A few trams were running, bread was plentiful, and the newspapers published more than one sheet. The most extraordinary fact, however, was the number of men about the streets in civilian attire. It was most charitable to suppose that they were either Macedonians or foreigners, but one was shrewdly tempted to imagine that some form of paternal graft was able to create a number of peaceful sinecures in a Ministry, the holders of which were exempt from military service.

On the Saturday, the National Chamber, the Skupshtina, was opened in state by the King for its extraordinary session. As a building the old Skupshtina can lay claim to little distinction. On the outside it resembles some dilapidated second-class racing stable, while its internal arrangements are on similar plan, although it is safe to guess that even a "ten pound plater" is given more generous quarters than those accorded to the brethren of the fourth estate.

The entire diplomatic corps, with the exception of the Turkish Minister, were present, most of them looking profoundly bored, which is not to be surprised at, considering that the majority understood not a single word of the speech from the throne. King Peter, who looked pale and careworn and certainly far more than his three-score years and seven, read out the conventional formula for such an occasion: "... exceptional circumstances . . . your devotion, Gentlemen . . . downtrodden co-nationalists . . . etc. . . ." The House then rose and the audience poured out into the drizzle.

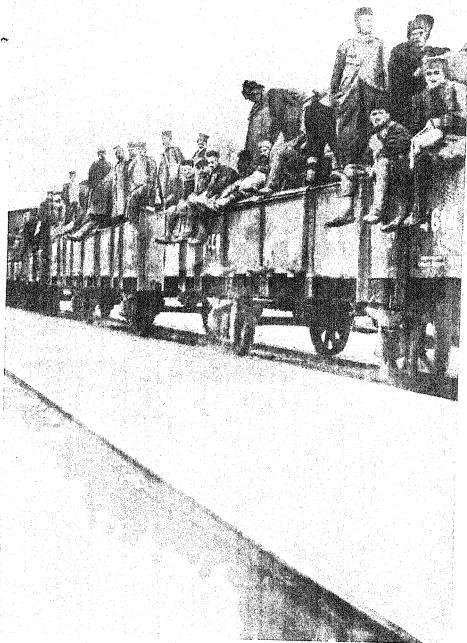
The financial side of the war was the chief bone of contention for the moment among the foreign diplomatists, and they openly declared that they could not understand why Servia was rushing into this war if she intended to keep her word about territorial aggrandisement.<sup>1</sup> At the lowest estimate the first few days of mobilization cost her about 750,000 francs a day, while war could not be waged at less than a daily expenditure of 500,000. By dint of scraping together the odds and ends of various loans, which were destined for

<sup>1</sup> For the pecuniary advantage of any such territorial aggrandisement, it will be remembered that France required the victorious allies to take over a fraction of the Ottoman Debt in proportion to their share in the spoils.

a very different purpose, she had collected a war chest of about 80,000,000; and when this was exhausted she would have to face the prospects of national bankruptcy. This, however, was not all. The country was losing roughly some 20,000 a day, owing to the stoppage of business, in addition to which at the close of the war it was inevitable that most of the foreign industrial concerns would claim enormous damages. The German sugar refinery in Belgrade had already practically lost a year's work since the mobilization order, which coincided with the moment for the delivery of the beets. Half of them were left rotting in the field, while the other half were scattered up and down the country at various tiny stations waiting for a train. The peasants would in course of time also feel this deeply, although they received part payments in advance; while further damages would, it was said, be claimed owing to the action of the military authorities using foreign rolling stock in an arbitrary way. Troops had been sent down to the front in any truck that came handy, and since the mobilization was not the mechanical success as described by Servian representatives of the English Press, they had been kept down on the frontier or passed through into Bulgaria. At the conclusion of the war, there was little doubt that a heavy bill would be sent in from Vienna and

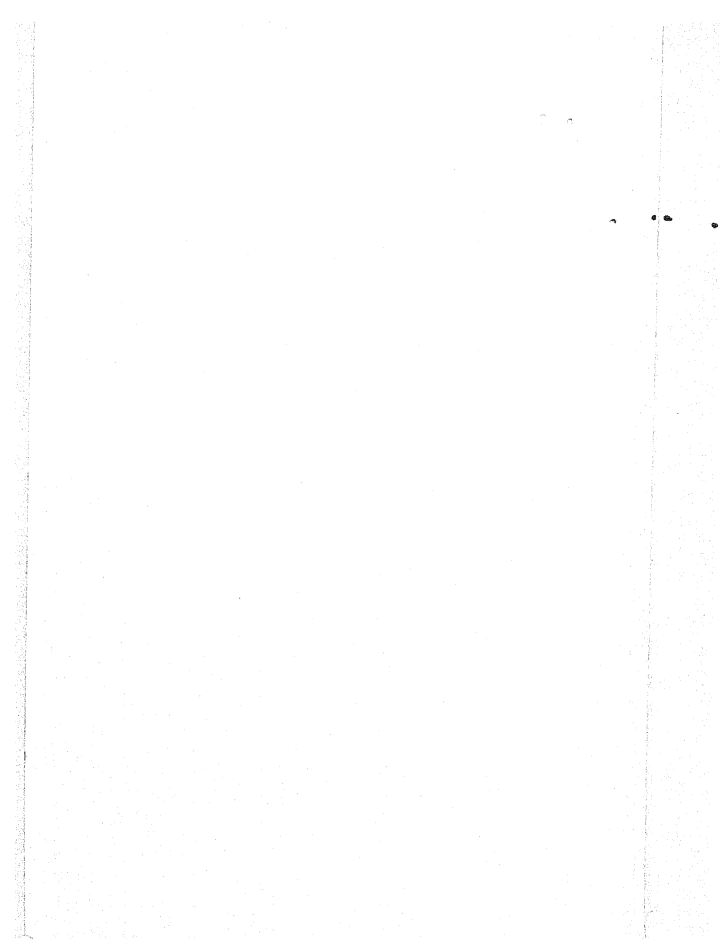
Budapest for their hire. Complaints had been heard too on all sides of goods being taken out of trucks and dumped down anywhere in order to free the vans. Stuff that was delivered was half spoiled, and merchants were refusing to receive the goods. The Legations were prepared for a busy time when the trouble was over.

On the following day a foreign diplomatist waxed very indignant on a certain subject, and it must be admitted that his remarks contained a stratum of truth which might well afford food for thought to certain British editors. He complained bitterly of the custom of certain English journals in keeping Servians to telegraph news at such a crisis. He showed me an account in a big English daily describing an enthusiastic demonstration which had taken place outside his Legation. "Thousands assembled outside the —— Legation," ran the account, "waving flags and cheering . . ." whereas the "thousands" in reality had consisted of a few hundred students and ragged schoolboys. He laid emphasis on the harm which this misleading exaggeration must cause in England, and one was obliged to confess that it was indeed curious how an independent Press like the English, which prides itself on the accuracy of its news, should trust to partial and coloured accounts. As a matter of fact, outward enthusiasm was remarkable



Servian reservists going to the front.





for its absence. Regiments went off and scarce a soul raised a shout or waved a handkerchief. The soldiers themselves had none of the brisk cheeriness of the Bulgarians. As a foreign minister expressed it tersely, "they might have been going to the *abattoir*."

But the most amazing fact in Belgrade was that in diplomatic circles the gravity of the crisis was not admitted. The Ministers seemed to be living in a fool's paradise, and it was useless to assure them that the allied States meant business. The pacific utterances and the honeyed words to which the various governments had had recourse were accepted as gospel truth, and if Turkey had not foiled the secret preparations of the Balkan League by deciding to hold general manœuvres in the vilayet of Adrianople, it is certain that the Ministers would have continued sending off optimistic despatches and would have considered themselves hardly used when the war broke out at the end of October, which was the time the States had agreed upon among themselves.

A glimpse at the enlistment grounds where the peasants were being herded, as they came in from their villages, afforded an interesting idea of the suffering and misery which the troops would suffer before the close of the campaign. Owing to the heavy rains, which had set in during the last

few days, the ground was in many places inches deep in water, and the men had been sleeping out without any covering since the publication of the mobilization order. Such surroundings told very heavily on the small shopkeeping class who were unaccustomed to such a rough life, and unless the arrangements for the troops at army headquarters were better it was easy to foretell that there would be a heavy death-roll from bronchitis and similar diseases. As a matter of fact, after three or four days of such life, the medical authorities were compelled to send a number of the men back to their homes in order to give them a chance of recovering from chills. One correspondent at least had the courage of his opinions and commented on this. He not only narrowly escaped expulsion—the importance of his paper prevented that—but a Servian paper, the *Piedmont* of Belgrade, made the following sinister threat: "If the correspondent of the — sends any more despatches of this kind, it will not be his messages which will be censored but himself."

On Wednesday, October 9, the astounding news of Montenegro's declaration of war took every one aback, especially as the earlier press telegrams had announced Turkey's decision to introduce into Macedonia the reforms sanctioned by the law of 1880, which would at least afford a convenient

basis for negotiation. The diplomatic corps was furious and did not hesitate to term it an insult to the Great Powers. Relatively, however, it created little excitement in the capital, although a few unscrupulous newspapers did a thriving business by selling extra editions which did not contain any additional news.

Reports were also freely circulated that the Austrian authorities were preventing a number of volunteers from crossing the frontier. As a matter of fact such action, if true, must have saved Serbia from rather an embarrassing situation, since she was in no position to welcome any addition to her fighting line, unless the men came equipped with their own rifles. Official protestations therefore were rather formal than sincere.

On the next day it became more and more apparent that the Montenegrin *coup de force* had created a serious flutter in diplomatic dovecots, and no secret was made of the fact that every one suspected Russia of having egged on King Nicholas. The chief argument given as proof of Russian support was that Nicholas declared war with such indecent haste in order to prevent the Russian and Austrian ministers presenting the pacific advice of their governments in Cetinje, as they did on the same day in Sofia, Belgrade and Athens. To use sporting parlance, "he beat them by a short

head," for the declaration of war was communicated to the Turkish Minister about an hour before the Austrian and Russian Ministers presented themselves at the Palace, which certainly seems too suggestive to be merely a coincidence. It was known, moreover, that some one must have disclosed the Austro-Russian intentions, because a certain Press Agency published the purport of the joint *démarche* before the Note was even presented to the allied Governments; and since Austria's main policy was to support Turkey, by the process of *reductio ad absurdum*, the onus of guilt recoiled upon Russia.<sup>1</sup> But the whole history of Russia's intrusive policy in the Balkan States must be reserved for a separate chapter. The only other explanation possible was that Montenegro relied on her position as the *enfant chéri* of Europe. This may be the case, but, as the — Minister remarked, "if so, she ought to be smacked and put in the corner."

From October 11 events moved apace, and it became more and more apparent, even to the dullest, that any intervention of the Powers would now come too late. On the 12th the Skupshtina

<sup>1</sup> Belgrade itself has known too many occasions when the Russian Minister advised one policy and the Russian Government secretly advised another, not to know that this is a regular Muscovite trick.

was, busy over the details of the Moratorium, which was finally declared for a period of three months. The next step was the presentation to the Turkish Ministers in the four capitals of the allied States of a Note dictating the reforms which must be applied by the Sublime Porte to improve the conditions of the Christian population in the vilayets of Macedonia and Adrianople. The reforms were divided into six clauses: grant of administrative autonomy to the two provinces, the appointment of two governor-generals of Swiss or Belgian nationality, the institution of "assemblées générales" by election, creation of a local gendarmerie and militia and the gift of free education. It was further stated that the application of these reforms should be entrusted to a higher council composed of Christians and Moslems in equal number under the surveillance of the ambassadors of the Great Powers and of the four Ministers of the Balkan States at Constantinople. The Porte was requested to declare its acceptance of these demands, to engage to put the reforms in execution within six months, and in case of an affirmative reply to rescind the decree for the mobilization of the Ottoman army as proof of its agreement.

At the same time the Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Sofia, Belgrade and Athens replied to the *démarches* made by Austria and Russia a few days

previously. This reply was of a conventional nature and stated that the three governments expressed their gratitude for the interest shown in the population of European Turkey, and considered that the time had come to obtain radical and definite reforms for these miserable people. Accordingly the three governments had considered it their duty to present their scheme of reforms to the Sublime Porte direct.

On the following day, October 14, Belgrade learnt of the occurrence of an incident which had long been expected, the collision of the two rival forces on the frontier. The Servian statement was that a body of Turkish troops had crossed the frontier near Ristovatz and had attacked a Servian detachment. It is regrettable to relate that the Servian authorities, both on this occasion and later, displayed the utmost reticence in publishing any news; and since the foreign correspondents who some days later found that the majority of the wounded at Nish had been engaged in fighting before the declaration of war, it is obvious that the Servian losses were far more considerable than was admitted at Belgrade.

Two days later came the news of the preliminary signature between Turkey and Italy. It is inconceivable that the allied States had not foreseen that such a proceeding was almost inevitable.

Throughout the war Italy had very rightly acted solely in her own interest. She had never paid any attention to the pressure of her allies or to the campaign of abuse which was opened in the Vienna Press. She had failed to gain any military prestige in the eyes of Europe, and she had spent over 500,000,000 frs. in the acquisition of a territory which for the next ten years would infallibly be the cause of much trouble and expense. It was only natural therefore that she should take the fullest advantage of a combination of events which secured for her more favourable terms than she might otherwise have obtained.

Such logic, however, did not appeal to the majority of the Servians, who seemed to consider that Italy would be fulfilling a Christian and philanthropic duty by continuing the blockade of the Asian coast so that Turkey would be prevented from bringing up her Smyrna forces to Salonica by sea. The complexion of the war seemed somewhat altered, since, however heavy the Turkish losses might be at the outset of the campaign, she would be free to draw upon the vast resources of her militant population. Servia and Bulgaria, on the contrary, had said their last word. The Austrian and Roumanian frontiers had been denuded of troops, and the loss of twenty or thirty thousand men would be a serious disaster.



On the same evening it was known that the Sublime Porte had refused to reply to the Note presented by the Balkan Governments, and that the Turkish Minister with the personnel of their legations had received orders to leave. Such a procedure meant that war was inevitable, and in twenty-four hours it was known that war had been declared.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE POLITICAL SITUATION

TO many readers it may seem out of place to introduce at this juncture an account of the political situation, but in view of the grave international interests which were involved later on, the writer has deemed it necessary to show briefly the ambitions of some parties and the blindness of others engaged in the war. In this way later events will be more readily understood.

It will be remembered that the allies opened the war with the definite statement that they were only fighting in order to win autonomy for their oppressed co-nationalists in Macedonia, and that there was no question of any territorial aggrandisement. This proceeding, however, was merely undertaken for the sake of "Dame Europe in the gallery," since otherwise the four Governments would scarcely have gone to the trouble of making an anticipatory division of the spoils. Every foreign observer in the Balkans realized that this campaign would only bring about a settlement

of the Balkan Question in the event of a Turkish victory. With the allies triumphant, a new and even more pressing danger was created, and indeed even the Turcophile Viennese Press was compelled to admit the impossibility of a maintenance of the *status quo* after the result of the first week's fighting. The alliance was cemented by a mutual hatred of Turkey, and with the defeat of their enemy the three chief States, Bulgaria, Greece and Servia, would naturally lose all common interests and would inevitably be involved in a series of bickerings and jealousies over the participation. Once again the two great wirepullers in the Balkan struggle, Austria and Russia, would have to fight for their respective interests, while in all probability a new factor would be added to the struggle in the shape of an enlarged and invigorated Bulgaria.

Russia has never abandoned her dream of a great Panslavonic Empire, and it is in pursuit of this that she has persistently pursued a policy of tortuous intrigue variegated by conspiracies or assassinations. In Bulgaria her kindly efforts to Russianize the country were thwarted by the robust genius of Stamboloff; and although the struggle cost him his life, it is probable that the savage work of the three hired bravos in the Rakoffsky Street effectually extinguished all Russia's hopes of making a pliable pawn out of the Bulgarian people.

With Serbia, however, she has met with more success, since in this case it was not a question of combating a patriotic desire for national individuality but of a single-handed contest with Austrophile proclivities. The full history of that fight will doubtless never be known until the archives of that white building opposite the Palace, whence M. Tcharikoff watched the murderous work of June 10, 1903, when the bleeding and mutilated bodies of Alexander and Draga were flung from their bedroom window by the regicides, will be published to the world. Such a scene was a fitting climax to the sinister and relentless persecution which Russia had pursued for seventy years. She had effected the abdication of Milosh Obrenovitch who secured the autonomy of Serbia, she is suspected of having inspired the assassination of Michael Obrenovitch III, she instigated at least one attempt on Milan Obrenovitch IV, and the Minister of Holy Russia had full cognizance of the military conspiracy which finally exterminated that unlucky dynasty. Yet to-day the vast majority of the Servian people, represented as they are by the Radical Party of all shades, are Russophile to a man.

Any extension of Servian territory would therefore be extremely gratifying to the Panslavist fanatics, and it was no mere instinct of courtesy

which urged Nicholas to send that congratulatory telegram to King Peter, when the Servian arms were crowned with success. Servia's position in the near future will be watched with the greatest interest. The menace of Austria is ever present. At one time Austria thought that it was of vital importance to the Dual Monarchy to hold the Sandjak of Novibazar and so prevent the creation of a solid block of contiguous Slavonic peoples in Servia, Old Servia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the evacuation of the Sandjak seemed bound to be an integral part of all peace negotiations. The expressive reference of Count Berchtold to the "sol brûlant" at the end of September looked as if Austria would be prepared to see this matter through to the bitter end. Events, however, have changed this policy, and it may be that by a judicious treatment of the Croats that Austria will build a bulwark against this menace.

On the other side Servia will be faced with an equally serious danger. The whole history of the Balkan Peninsula proved unquestionably that Bulgaria was the most virile and robust race. It was this which had enabled her, and doubtless will enable her in the future, to withstand all Russia's attempts at absorption. Since her declaration of independence she has made the most striking progress. A magnificent system of rail-

ways, both from a strategical as well as a commercial point of view, has been constructed; the most distant towns and villages have been linked by the telephone; the creation at great expense of harbours at Varna, Nikopoli and Bourgas have opened up a vista of a mercantile marine; mines have been exploited in various parts, whilst in view of her magnificent timber growths the science of afforestation has received scientific attention, so that the wilful destruction to which the peasants were accustomed may be remedied and repaired by systematic planting and cultivation. A comparison between Sofia and either Athens or Belgrade, which have enjoyed independence for well-nigh thrice as many years, is the most convincing proof of the astounding way in which Bulgaria has outstripped her neighbours.

The absorption of Bulgaria into a Panslavonic Empire is extremely improbable. In the first place the Bulgarians are not Slavs but came of an Ugar-Aryan stock which became Slavicized after the collapse of the Bulgarian Empire. They have none of the mysticism of the Slav race: instead of mournfully brooding over the past, and composing sad folk-songs on the battle of Kossovo, they have shown a dogged and thorough resolution which has won the admiration of all who know the country. A strong sense of national indivi-

duality is imbedded in their character; in fact, when the Panslavist intrigues were at their height the sinister cry was raised, "Better Turkish than Russian," and now when every admirer of their great statesman is waiting for the entry into politics of his second son, Stepan Stamboloff, who in looks and acts is the replica of his father, Russia will be faced with an almost insuperable struggle. The rise of Bulgaria is only equalled by that of Japan, and there are many who believe that the great era of the Tsars Simeon and Krum, whose empire stretched from the Black Sea to the Adriatic and south to the Ægean, will once more be revived. The dream of a Big Bulgaria leapt into concrete shape at the Treaty of San Stefano, and although the Powers took away with the left hand what they had given with the right, it is that ideal which the nation set itself to achieve. In peace and war, in commercial and educational development, they have proved their right to take their place among the nations, and it will be the realization of a Big Bulgaria which will once and for ever shatter the hopes of a Panslavonic Empire.

It will be seen therefore that Servia will in all probability be ground between the upper and the nether millstones. The whole history of the Macedonian internecine warfare has proved that Bulgaria must eat up the Slav and the Hellene, for the

survival of the fittest is the primal law of nature. And in this respect the Servians, if victorious, will be faced with a long and protracted struggle to the south, which must drain her resources and make her even an easier prey to her surrounding enemies. In the division of the spoil which was drawn up in Sofia, Belgrade and Athens before the war, Servia secured the best portion by skilful haggling and by hanging back until the last moment. Hence Old Servia, or Kossovo, fell to her share. In this district, however, the Arnauts or Moslem Albanians greatly outnumber the Orthodox Serbs; in fact the most reliable statistics place the superiority of Albanians as 200,000 to 60,000. These Arnauts, having a deep-rooted horror of all such civilized amenities as tax-paying, or any form of government, save their own institutions, have been a constant thorn in the side of the Turks for years; and it is obvious that under any form of Servian rule <sup>1</sup> they would take to the mountains and indulge in a guerilla warfare after their own hearts. The Albanian belongs to probably the oldest race in Europe. He is intensely proud, often arrogant, but in his own special line one of the finest fighters imaginable. Life among those rugged, towering mountains is precisely the same

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the expressed hope of the inhabitants at Uskub, chapter xiii.



as it was 500 years ago, save for the introduction of the rifle as a surer means of settling accounts. The Albanians have kept up their long struggle with the Turks in order to prevent the "Ottomanization" policy of the Committee of Union and Progress. They will with an even lighter heart continue their struggle with the Serb, for apart from all racial and political consideration, there will be the far more bitter stimulus of religion. To cope successfully with this warlike and fanatical race Servia will be compelled to keep little less than an army corps in Kossovo, and her financial condition is decidedly unequal to such a burden. By appealing to Bulgaria to assist her she will only be met with a direct snub, since there would be nothing that would suit Bulgaria more than to see her quondam ally involved in a continuous and prolonged struggle. Ferdinand would certainly not raise a hand to assist.

Great stress has been laid on the fact that one of the clauses in the Balkan Alliance is an offensive and defensive alliance for a period of fifty years. To this little attention need be paid, for though a dog and a cat may alike loathe the rat, they are pretty certain to quarrel with each other once the rat has been removed from their path; and it would prove no surprise to those who have studied



A few of the Krupp guns and caissons captured by the Servians at Kumanovo.



1st Regiment Sofia marching off. These men were practically annihilated in the assault on Adrianople.



the Balkan peoples and noticed the mutual mistrust of the Bulgarian and Serb, the contempt of the Montenegrin for the Serb, and the hatred of Bulgarian, Serb and Montenegrin for the Greek, if within three years of the partition of Macedonia the alliance were dissolved and two of the ex-friends at daggers drawn.

Whatever King Ferdinand's faults in the past, he has certainly shown himself an amazingly astute diplomatist in this crisis, since he has induced the other three States to enter on a war the entire profit of which must eventually redound to Bulgaria. The evolution of events is curiously ironical. Reference has been made to the period when the great Greek statesman, M. Trikoupis, proposed to Sofia a Balkan League for the expulsion of Turkey from Europe and for the partition of Macedonia. The "boundless ambition" of Bulgaria, to use M. Trikoupis' own phrase, foiled the plan. M. Stamboloff reported the negotiations to the Sultan, and was rewarded by the extension of the privileges of the Exarchate. Yet it is by the agency of Bulgaria herself now that the League has sprung into being; and in course of time the Greeks may realize, but then it will be too late, that the ambition is still "boundless." One needs to be a brazen pot of powerful mould to go floating down stream with Bulgaria as a neighbour. Of course his task was

greatly facilitated by the fall of M. Milovanovitch, who always saw that the maintenance of good relations between Serbia and Turkey was the surest guarantee of the balance of power in the Near East. In this way Serbia ran less risk of being driven too far along the Austrophile road, or of being used perpetually by Russia for pulling the chestnuts out of the fire. Unhappily for Serbia she has merely altered her market for these costly dainties, and instead of being imported into Russia, they are despatched across the frontier to Sofia. Of course it may be urged that Servian diplomacy scored a signal success in the *Dreibund* and secured a greater share than was her due by adopting the principles in use by the small but intelligent band of Eatonsville electors who kept their votes back to the last moment and so secured a better price. Allies, however, have an unhappy knack of disregarding parchment obligations when they happen to know that they have sufficient armed strength behind them to turn a deaf ear to the formal complaints as regards political honesty, which is no longer of any account in international treaties. King Ferdinand may be heartily congratulated on his skill in applying the moral of the tale of the Walrus and the Carpenter. It requires no very penetrating eye to discern which rôle he has reserved for the three minor partners

in the league so aptly described in a German newspaper as a *Gesellschaft* (trading company).

It will be seen from these few pages, necessarily condensed though they are, that Europe cannot hope to have disposed once and for all of the Balkan Question. True that the old question which with its sinister memories of Art. XXIII and of the Mürzsteg programme will be analysed by the impartial verdict of another age and adjudged as the most astounding blunder of European diplomacy, but from its ashes, like a second phoenix, has already risen a successor which in time will claim its full share of blood. The cloud, at present no larger than a man's hand, is already adumbrated on the horizon. What will be the action of Roumania *vis-à-vis* with the sudden creation of a Big Bulgaria? The gift of the Vardar and the Struma to the Bulgaria outlined by the Treaty of San Stefano was responsible for such a chorus of protests from the other states that the Powers were forced to go back on their own intentions and proceed to a fresh distribution of territory. Even then there was general dissatisfaction, while Servia even went so far as declaring war.

The situations, however, as created by the Balkan League of 1912, will prove intolerable for Roumania. Mutterings of discontent were heard among military circles when the allies were only

mobilizing, and many of her statesmen were fully agreed that to await a Big Bulgarian success and then demand a portion of the spoils was utter folly. A nation flushed with victory and gratified ambition is rarely generous in parting with its booty to a neighbour who has sat by and merely watched the proceedings. On the other hand had Roumania negotiated with Bulgaria early in the day and demanded an earnest for her benevolent neutrality, it was practically certain that Bulgaria would have acceded to any reasonable request.

Wedge in between the stupendous mass of the Muscovite Empire and the restless pushing ambitions of Bulgaria, Roumania's existence as an independent nationality will be precarious in the extreme. Indeed it is remarkable that this curious relic of Roman conquest should have survived as it is. Her only hope is in Austria, and with the accession of Franz Ferdinand with his active sectarian proclivities she will probably meet with greater support. On the other hand she may find Russia coquetting with her favours should the Big Bulgaria prove to be absorbing Serbia and so finally extinguishing the Panslavonic hopes. But Roumania has never forgiven the Russians for their callous seizure of Bessarabia by the Treaty of Berlin. The "accursed Pruth" divides them once again from her kinsmen, and it would require

little short of the union of that district, the Alsace and Lorraine of Roumania, to prove the genuineness of Russian friendship. The marks of favour which the Tsar showered on King Charles during the early days of the crisis and the war are the first outward signs of Russian determination to keep the Roumanians in a good humour, but it will require more than a field-marshal's bâton and a decoration to oust Austrian influence in Bukarest. It is a Balkan axiom that Bukarest will obey all orders from Vienna, and her course of action will depend largely on the greed of Servia, the efforts which Bulgaria will make to gratify her ally, and the nature of the compensation made by the allies to Roumania herself.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE DECLARATION OF WAR

THE morning of October 17, which, when the full tale of its consequences is unravelled, will be reckoned among the decisive dates of history, was ushered in with the information that a second frontier incident of a most serious nature had taken place near Prepolatz, on the road between Kurshumli and Prishtina.

It was evident that the end was now at hand, and about six o'clock it became known both in Sofia and in Belgrade that Turkey had declared war on Bulgaria and Servia. The exact terms of her declaration was brief in the extreme—

“The general mobilization and concentration of the Bulgarian and Servian forces on the Ottoman frontier, the daily attacks on fortified posts and positions all along this frontier, the interference in the national affairs of Turkey, and the inadmissible and inconceivable demands of the Bulgarian and Servian Governments, have rendered the main-

tenance of peace between Turkey and Bulgaria and Servia impossible.

"The heads of the Royal Legations of Bulgaria and Servia and their staffs are consequently informed that they must obtain passports and leave Ottoman territory as soon as possible."

The exclusion of any mention of Greece in this note was explained by the fact that the Porte was awaiting information as to whether the Greek note which the Ottoman Minister at Athens had returned to M. Coromilas was identical with the Bulgarian and Servian. This delay, however, did not effect the issue, since Greece herself took the initiative and declared war that evening. On the next day the reply of the allies stating the reasons for entering upon a war, in which the vials of vengeance pent up for years—it might be said for centuries—would be freely and savagely poured forth, was delivered to the foreign Governments.

It is regrettable that both in the Note of the Allies and in King Ferdinand's subsequent proclamation to his people an appeal was made to Christian sentimentality. It was known to all that an awful reckoning between Slav, Hellene and Ottoman was to be fought out. But such a struggle should be fought out on the merits of the combatants. War is a natural function in the evolution of States and of peoples. War is also cruel.

But there is no reason why this cruelty should have been accentuated by a sentimentality created by a religious intolerance as vicious as was ever any of the fanatical assaults of the Crescent on European countries in the past.

The exact terms of the Note was as follows—

“The anarchy which exists in Turkey and which so deeply affects the peace and security of the neighbouring countries having grown in extent for some time, the Great Powers deemed it necessary to take in hand the realization of the reforms provided by Art. XXIII of the Treaty of Berlin. In reply to this last manifestation of a collective will of Europe, the Sublime Porte had had recourse to a procedure which has served the purpose of Turkey more than once. The Sublime Porte has declared that serious reforms would be introduced both in the European and in the Asiatic provinces, but that foreign interference in the application of these reforms would not be profitable to their application.

“This promise of Turkey to apply serious reforms on her own responsibility has met throughout the world with the mistrust of which Count Andrassy spoke of in his Note of December 30, 1875: ‘One of the principal causes of this deeply-rooted mistrust should be looked for in the fact that more than one measure included in the late iradés of

the, Sultan has been proclaimed without the condition of the Christians experiencing any sensible improvement therefrom.' In the last thirty-seven years events have proved abundantly the justice of this remark. And so the Governments of Bulgaria, Servia and Greece no longer being able to tolerate the sufferings of their co-nationalists in Turkey and a situation so pregnant with danger for their own future, have decided to demand efficient control in the elaboration and realization of the only radical reforms which are capable of improving the miserable lot of the Christians and the pacification of the Balkan Peninsula.

"This last attempt, the moderation of which contrasts favourably with the provocative attitude of Turkey, who had mobilized against the Balkan States without any serious reason, having failed, and the rupture of diplomatic relations having been ordered by the Sublime Porte, the Royal Governments of Bulgaria, Greece and Servia have been obliged to their great regret to have recourse to arms.

"The allied Governments hope that the end which they are pursuing in this declaration of war coincides with the interests of all civilized people. Foreigners residing in the provinces, the permanent pacification of which is the object of the war, can only but profit. Under a régime of Liberty, Order

and Progress the national interests of all countries are certain of protection, while material prosperity and intellectual development will be the object of a solicitude as assured as enlightened."

A stronger note still was struck by King Ferdinand in his manifesto to his nation—

"Bulgarians! In the course of my reign of twenty-five years I have always sought, in the peaceful work of civilization, the progress, welfare and glory of Bulgaria, and it was in this direction that I wished to see the Bulgarian nation constantly advance, but Providence has judged otherwise. The moment has come when the Bulgarian race is called upon to renounce the benefits of peace and have recourse to arms for the solution of a great problem. Beyond the Rilo and the Rhodope Mountains our brothers in blood and religion have not been able until this day, thirty-five years after our liberation, to obtain a bearable life. All the efforts made to attain this object, both by the Great Powers and by the Bulgarian Government, have failed to create conditions permitting these Christians to enjoy human rights and liberties. The tears of the Balkan slave and the groaning of millions of Christians could not but stir our hearts, the hearts of their kinsmen and co-religionists, who are indebted for our peaceful life to a great Christian liberator, and the Bulgarian nation has

often remembered the prophetic words of the Tsar Liberator—'The work is begun, it must be carried through.' Our love of peace is exhausted.

"To succour the Christian population in Turkey there remains to us no other means than to turn to arms. We see that it is only by this means that we can assure them protection of life and property. The anarchy in the Turkish provinces has even menaced our national life. After the massacres of Ishtib and Kotchana, instead of according justice and satisfaction as we demanded, the Turkish Government ordered the mobilization of its military forces. Our long patience was thus put to a rude test. The humanitarian sentiments of Christians, the sacred duty of succouring their brothers when they are menaced with extermination, and the honour and dignity of Bulgaria, imposed upon me the imperative duty of calling to the colours Bulgaria's sons who are prepared for the defence of the Fatherland. Our work is a just, great and sacred one. With faith gathered in the protection and support of the Almighty, I bring to the cognizance of the Bulgarian nation that war for the human rights of the Christians in Turkey is declared.

"I order the brave Bulgarian army to march on the Turkish territory at our sides, and with us will fight, for the same object against a common enemy,

the armies of the Balkan States allied to Bulgaria—Servia, Greece and Montenegro. And in this struggle of the Cross against the Crescent, of liberty against tyranny, we shall have the sympathies of all those who love justice and progress. Strong in these sympathies, let the valorous Bulgarian soldier remember the heroic acts of his forefathers and the bravery of his Russian mentors and liberators, and let him fly from victory to victory. Forward! May God be with you.”

Both in the cathedrals of Sofia and Belgrade a solemn Te Deum was held. Prayers were offered for the Russian Tsar, Tsaritzza and the Tsarevitch, the Sovereigns of the Royal Houses of Greece and Montenegro, and lastly a petition to the God of Justice and Mercy that He would grant victory to the united armies and united nations of the Christian Balkans. There can be little doubt that this proclamation of the twentieth century crusade of the holy war of the Cross against the Crescent was a premeditated action on the part of Ferdinand. For some weeks throughout the churches of Bulgaria a similar appeal had been made in every pulpit, while in the sermon in Sofia cathedral that Friday morning the preacher did not hesitate to say that “the Cross must do battle against the Crescent. The great Christian Powers have failed to obtain justice, and to us has fallen the duty of

wiping out from Europe the last vestiges of the stain of barbarism and oppression."

No one, and much less a great power like England or France, with many millions of Moslem subjects, can deny that such action on the part of Bulgaria was in the worst of taste, and may yet be the cause of untold trouble. Such appeals to religious passion tended not only to aggravate the bitterness of the struggle, but also placed insuperable difficulties in the task of the Turkish Government, which was occupied in extinguishing the flame which certain Committee extremists were trying to kindle. This deliberate introduction of sectarian issues into what was mainly a political and racial struggle made the most painful impression on the more far-sighted governments and statesmen, who realize that the world has not been created for the special benefit of the Balkan confederation. The dignified appeal of the Ameer of Afghanistan, who without any reference to the religious side of the struggle telegraphed a gift of £2,000 for the relief of the wounded, and issued an appeal to the Mohammedans of India to interrupt for the moment all large public works, such as the new university at Aligarh, and to concentrate their subscriptions for the alleviation of the wounded, might have been taken by King Ferdinand as a valuable lesson in international courtesy.



On the same morning King Peter of Servia left his capital to join the Crown Prince Alexander and the General Staff at Nish. In that ancient town his proclamation to the army, which was merely a long and wearisome recapitulation of the sufferings of the Servian population in Macedonia was read aloud. The order for the general advance of the army was then given, and since Ferdinand himself was at Stara Zagora, the headquarters of the Bulgarian General Staff, it was known that the die had been finally cast and the long-expected struggle, which had been prophesied every year against "the melting of the snows," had at last begun.

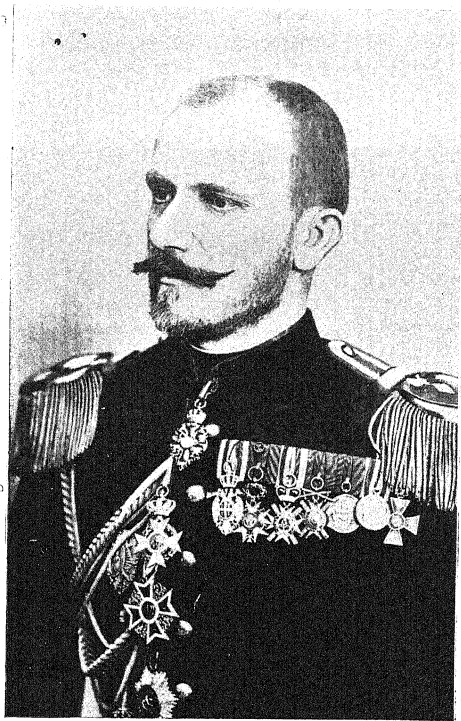
## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ALLIED ARMIES AND THE GENERAL FORECAST OF OPERATIONS

A PART from all political considerations, the war in the Balkans affords food for serious thought, when we remember that Bulgaria, whose total population is less than that controlled by the London County Council, was able to put in the field an army of 350,000 men, or more than double the strength of the British expeditionary force which our present Minister of War is never tired of praising. We have already seen in a previous chapter the incidents which led up to its preparation and the doubts thrown on its readiness on the eve of the crisis. Once, however, the mobilization order had been carried into effect, it was plain to every eyewitness that the Bulgarian army, whose stern fighting qualities had never been in doubt, would give a remarkably good account of itself in the coming struggle. The generalship alone remained an unknown quality, but from the enthusiastic way in which every military officer spoke of General

Savoff, it was evident that perfect confidence between the leader and the men of the rank and file, the primary element of success, was not lacking. The Generals of the Army Corps, Ivanoff, Kuvetcheff, and Radzo Dimitrieff, had the reputation of being able commanders, but except as sub-lieutenants in the Servian War they had had no experience of active service.

The utmost care and forethought had been expended on the Bulgarian army. The troops were equipped with a new quickfiring Mannlicher model, while the artillery was composed almost entirely of Creuzot-Schneiders, which throughout the campaign gave complete satisfaction, finding a range about the third shot. Two aeroplanes which had previously been tried in some exceptionally fine flights around Sofia were in use. The commissariat department had already given valuable evidence of its efficiency during the manœuvres, while the Red Cross organization had been a special object of King Ferdinand's vigilance for many years. With a view to the investment of Adrianople siege batteries of 15 cm. howitzers and 13 cm. guns which were mostly of Krupp pattern, were in use while it was known to the foreign military representatives that the Bulgarians attached the greatest importance to a new and highly developed type of hand grenades or bombs, such as had been used with



General Michitch, Chief of Crown Prince of Serbia's Staff.



such success by the Japanese outside Port Arthur. The details and composition of this terrible weapon were, however, jealously guarded, and its practical value was unknown at the time. The cavalry, however, was weak, and the Bulgarians trusted to what the French have termed the fifth arm for completing their efficiency in reconnaissance.

The original plan of operations as outlined by the Bulgarian General Staff showed soundness rather than originality. A division or possibly two divisions was to be sent from Kustendil through Egri Palanka to join the eastern Servian column and act under the command of the Servian general. The bulk of the army was entrusted with the operations which had for their end the fall of Adrianople, the key of Turkey in Europe. On the success or failure of this task really depended the result of the campaign, since an irretrievable disaster to Bulgaria would mean the collapse of the whole League. A splendid army of five divisions with the Servian cavalry was detailed to advance under General Ivanoff along the Maritza Valley. A second army, known later as the Army of the Rhodope, was kept for work in Thrace, while the third under Dimitrieff was supposed to advance by the Tundja Valley. At the eleventh hour, however, as will be seen in a later chapter, the whole of this project was radically changed with

the exception of the advance of the Kustendil column.

In direct comparison with the Bulgarian troops, the Servians were to all intents and purposes an unknown quantity. Military opinion was directly influenced by the memory of the débâcle of Slivnitza, and although it was generally admitted that care and perseverance had effected a substantial improvement during the last three years, the appearance and organization of the army gave no cause for undue optimism. The Serbs more than any other Slav race possess the defects of the Slavs to an extraordinary extent. The Russians, however, throughout history, have never proved so dangerous as when their backs are against the wall, whereas the Servian requires a victory at the outset in order to develop his military ardour.

The Servian fighting line was estimated at about 210,000 men, but of these only 145,000 were equipped with modern rifles. The remainder used either the old type of Mauser or one which had been hastily converted into a quickfirer. For reconnaissance purposes they were compelled to rely entirely on cavalry, numbering about 4,000, while save on the direct lines from Vrania to Uskub and Pristina to Uskub, bullock wagons formed the only means of transport. The artillery, like that of their neighbours, consisted of Creusot field-guns ;

but the historical precedent of Slivnitsa, when the Servian artillery rather than run any risk of being captured was at once withdrawn at the slightest sign of the enemy's advance, prevented military opinion from forming any high estimate of its efficiency. The Red Cross arrangements were absolutely deplorable. The medical authorities decided at the outset that no serious operations should be performed at the front. Nish was allotted as the clearing centre, but the organization in Belgrade was so incomplete that once the military hospital was full, the schools and other buildings which were improvised at a moment's notice had not even sufficient beds for the wounded, and on the tenth day of the war a large order was despatched to England for blankets, sheets and pillow-cases. The capital was denuded of doctors, despite the previous agreement as to all serious operations being performed in Belgrade, so that every foreign surgeon was called in to do the work, and there were many regrettable cases of men dangerously,<sup>1</sup> even mortally, wounded being sent up on the long trying three days' journey with their wounds mortifying, instead of being left on the

<sup>1</sup> I myself saw two men in a makeshift hospital at Belgrade, one shot through the lungs, the other in the groin. Both men had been lying in that hospital a week, but their wounds had not even been dressed.

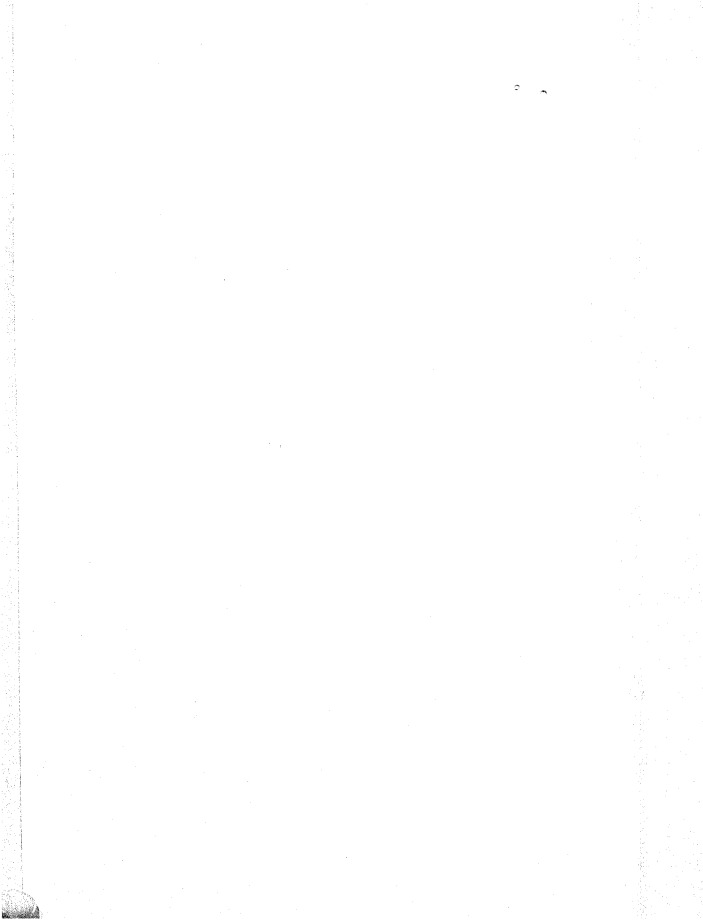


battlefield, where at least they would have died in peace.

The strategical plan for the invasion of Macedonia which had been mapped out by the Servian General Staff as far back as 1902, provided for the converging advance of three separate columns, with a fourth army thrown out on the extreme west with orders to operate in the Sandjak and to effect a junction with the Montenegrins coming down from their own country. The headquarters of the three chief columns were at Kurshumli, Vrania and Kustendil in Bulgaria. The latter army, which was a composite Serbo-Bulgarian force under the command of General Stepanovitch, contained about 40,000 infantry, more than half of whom were Bulgarian, 1,500 sabres, three squadrons of divisional cavalry, and seventy-two guns. The Kurshumli force, which had Pristina as its first objective, was commanded by General Yankovitch, who had had some previous experience of foreign manœuvres, but had never seen active service. He had some 28,000 rifles, five squadrons of cavalry, and between forty-four and forty-eight guns. The Ibar army, which was detailed off for some special work, as will be seen later, was commanded by General Zivkovitch, and was formed of some 36,000 rifles, twenty-four to thirty-six guns, and five squadrons of cavalry. The main army, which was generally supposed



Idris Sapher, an Albanian Chief, who surrendered to Serbia.



would have to meet the Turkish Macedonian army, was commanded by the Crown Prince, and was made up of 30,000 sabres, eight squadrons of divisional cavalry, 100,000 rifles, 120 guns, and eight guns belonging to the horse artillery.

A strategical plan which depended on the successful convergence of three separate columns cut off from all communications from each other, and dependent upon roads impassable for little else than bullock wagons for their food transport, was bold indeed.

If this term is applicable to the Servian plan of operation, what can be said of the strategic idea of the entire allied forces in the western theatre of war? Von Moltke's magnificent daring, which led up to the victory of Köenigratz and the combined advance of the Japanese columns on Liao-Yang, afford the only parallel in history, and in each of these two cases every step of the move and every detail of the organization was down on paper and worked out to a nicety. But according to the combined plan of the allies, no less than seven concentric lines of advance were outlined, a task which was entrusted to troops of no fewer than four nationalities, two of whom had been routed in their last war, whilst the third believed that in the days of the mitrailleuse and the quickfire the wild rushes of the fifteenth century were still applicable.

The phenomenal success which attended this manoeuvre is sufficient proof, not only that the numbers of the Turks had been greatly exaggerated, but that their organization just at the same time must have been absolutely rotten. With characteristic braggadocio, the Greeks had announced that they could place an army of 170,000 in the field, whereas by the cold certainty of facts certainly not more than 80,000 crossed the Thessalian passes. Allowing, therefore, that the Montenegrins could spare 10,000 to 15,000 to operate with their kinsfolk in the Sandjak, the total number which the allies were employing in order to pen in the Turkish Macedonian army can have fallen little short of a quarter of a million. On paper such a figure undoubtedly seems formidable, but there is little doubt that a brilliant commander at the head of a small mobile field army, in which efficiency had not been sacrificed to numbers, would not only have made things extremely awkward for the allies by taking them, and especially the weaker members, piecemeal, but in all probability would have brought the campaign to a speedy conclusion. The Arnauts might safely be left to check the Servian invasion from the north, indeed, in guerilla war of this kind they were probably better left to their own devices than when commanded by regular officers, as after events proved to be the case on many occasions.

A mobile field force of about 100,000 could then have concentrated at leisure in some central spot such as Uskub and struck at whichever hostile column drew ahead of its fellows, an eventuality which was little short of a certainty in the course of a simultaneous advance of seven forces which had lost sight of each other during their simultaneous advance.

Apart from their regular troops, the allies were placing great hopes on the work which the bandsmen would achieve in cutting communications, blowing up bridges, etc.; but except in Thrace, where the Bulgar comitadjis were very active, reliance on this sinister assistance was rudely disappointed.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SERVIAN ADVANCE

**I**T will be remembered that the narration of the course of events was in a previous chapter brought up to the moment when the King's proclamation was read to his army at Nish and the general order for the advance was given. On the Saturday morning it was known that the three columns as well as the force known as the Ibar division had crossed the frontier, and the intelligence of the first engagement was awaited with breathless interest.

When the full history of the war comes to be written impartially from the Turkish side, doubtless many points which are now shrouded in mystery as far as a military appreciation of the campaign is concerned will be cleared up. We shall then know why, in the Macedonian theatre of war as in the Adrianople, the Turkish commander not only neglected the elemental axiom of fighting that the offensive is the most effective form of the defensive, but also acted in direct contradiction



General Yankovitch's 3rd Army march through Uskub from Pristina on the way to Albania





of their orders from home. We have already pointed out the risk run by the three eastern columns in attempting to converge on one objective through such a wild and difficult country as Macedonia, when they were without any means of communication. The Turkish employment of Arnauts as a protective screen of irregulars who sniped the Servians incessantly, while retiring as soon as artillery was used, was excellent; but if Zeki Pasha had at the same time thrown off three or four divisions (a Turkish division is only 12,000 men) and fallen on Stepanovitch's composite Serbo-Bulgarian column, the history of the war in Macedonia might have been a very different complexion. In the first place Stepanovitch is a distinctly third-rate general; and, despite the presence of Bulgarian troops under his command, a reverse would have led to a hasty retreat. Such a reverse would inevitably react on the operation of the main Bulgarian army. It is true that 30,000 men could hold the Deve Bair Pass against an army, while the existence of the railway from Sofia to Kustendil ensures a constant supply of troops; but no capital likes to feel that a relentless and persistent pressure is being applied on one of its approaches only a few miles away. In addition to this the élan of the Turkish soldier would have been encouraged by the memories of past successes which brought

them up to the gates of Vienna. Even had the attack resulted in a check, it would have been far less deleterious to the morale and prestige of the army than a continuous retirement.

The campaign was not twenty-four hours old before we received definite proof that both public and correspondents were going to be pestered and misled with the publication of false news. Towards 6 p.m. it was stated on all sides that a telephonic message had just come through from Nish to the effect that Yankovitch's troops had occupied Prishtina. No news is too startling to gain credence during a campaign. At every street corner one was reminded that it was only 30 kilometres from the frontier, and that the enemy had started to advance the previous evening. The memory of the Arnauts' attack on Prepolatz and the certainty that these gentry would certainly make matters warm in that district was ignored. The disillusionment came on Sunday morning, when a laconic official report announced that the small village of Poduyevo had been taken by assault, the Servian infantry taking full advantage of a heavy mist. This little place, in which great quantities of ammunition and biscuits, eighty tents and several oxen were found abandoned, was granted the distinction of being the first Macedonian town to enjoy Servian administration since a lapse of over

500 years, and a sub-prefect was installed there the next day.

In every skirmish or engagement throughout those first twenty-four hours the Servians were successful along the whole front. Stepanovitch came through the Deve Bair Pass with his mixed force, and after a sharp struggle with the Arnauts made himself master of Sultan Tepe, an important blockhouse on the Ossogoyivo Mountains, south-east of Egri Palanka.

The main Servian army under the Crown Prince, who had Colonel Michich, the ablest officer in the Servian army, as his Chief of Staff, occupied Buzhanowatz, and then was engaged in a stern struggle round Mount Rujan, where some Arnauts and a few regulars were entrenched. The position was naturally powerful, and at nightfall the Servians were no nearer their goal. The lessons of the Japanese War, however, were not lost on Michich. At dead of night he ordered the "Stepen Nemanya" regiment, which takes its name from the great Servian tsar of mediaeval times, to advance and hold a ridge which he had marked during the afternoon's fighting. As day just broke, a moment which has often proved of great effect in attacking Turkish forces when entrenched, the Servians dashed forward and carried the lines by assault. The enemy was driven off in complete disorder,

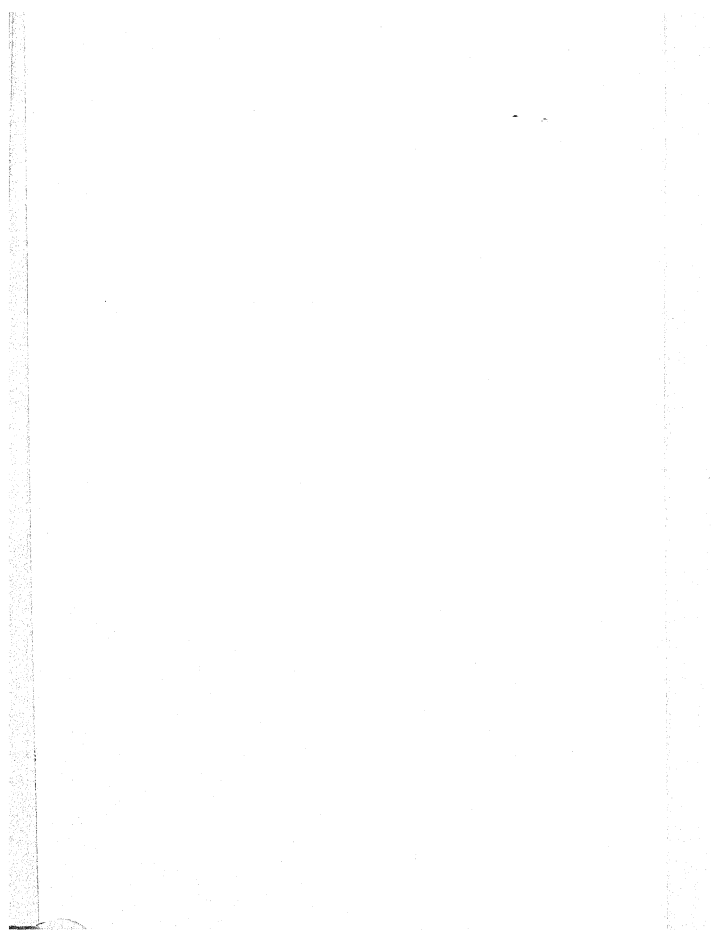
abandoning their camp, some quickfirers and many rifles, but the proudest trophy was a regimental standard which a gigantic corporal of this historic regiment had captured with his own hands after cutting down four of the enemy.

There can be no doubt that this series of successes at the very beginning of the campaign had an extraordinary effect on the Servian troops. Despite a stubborn resistance by Arnauts in every village, and the nature of this resistance will be realized when we remember that in the first few days of the war the Servians had already over 1,000 wounded, they carried on the work with such thoroughness that until the Crown Prince's army reached Kumanovo, the struggle seemed more like a military promenade than a bitter inter-racial strife. As the columns penetrated further and further into Macedonia with its chainwork of mountains and villages, the commissariat became an increasingly difficult problem. Heavy rains had rendered the roads impassable for anything save bullock wagons, which were quite incompetent to deal with the needs of some 175,000 men; but the men went on cheerfully and uncomplaining, continually sniped, and nourished for the most part on sheer enthusiasm.

The first essential step was to make a clean sweep of the Turkish blockhouses. A regular drive was



Turkish prisoners being paraded prior to removal from Uskub to Nisch. Those with crosses on caps are Christians. At the flight from Uskub all Ottoman Christians thus proclaimed their religion, counting on it to save their lives. This it undoubtedly did in most cases.



instituted in the periphery around Vrania, and the Turks were forced to fall back right beyond the far side of the Morava. It was in the course of these operations that the first of many regrettable white flag incidents took place. An Albanian band pretended to surrender to a detachment under a young officer, Lieutenant Popovitch. Suspecting nothing, he went forward with his troops, whereupon the Albanians drew their revolvers and shot them down to a man. Very naturally the utmost was made of this act. A wild outcry was raised against the barbarism of the Turks, and Servians were amazed to hear how often the British had experienced this treatment in South Africa. They would have been still more surprised had they learnt that on certain occasions our own soldiers were not guiltless. But few civilians realize how difficult it is to check firing when men are seeing red.

The Eastern Army continued its victorious career in south-west directions, which would at length bring it in touch with the Crown Prince's force. Egri Pelanka, Kratovo and Kotchana, the scene of the massacre in August which fanned the smouldering hatred, fell into Servian hands. At each place there was some resistance on the part of the Albanians, who were also accused of various atrocities on women and children. The losses of



the allies, however, were not disclosed, and as the wounded from this column were mostly taken back into Bulgaria, it was almost impossible to obtain even a fair estimate.

General Yankovitch's army encountered a stubborn resistance in the Teneshdol Pass to the north of Prishtina, but once the troops had gained the head of the defile the rest was easy, and the entry into Prishtina was won with comparatively little loss of life. The moral effect of the fall of this place, the key to the Kossovo plain (Plain of the Crows), where the Balkan races suffered the crushing defeat which has inspired the most mournful of their ballads, was very great. Its strategical importance could not be underrated either, since it commanded the railway to Uskub.

The Ibar column under General Zivkovitch, who had the reputation of being the most savage officer in the army, was delayed some days owing to fog. To him was entrusted the task of pacifying the Albanians, a work which he is believed to have carried out under the fine old principle, "*solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant.*" The utmost secrecy was preserved as to his movements and operations. Only the most meagre reports came to headquarters, but his advance was equally successful. After capturing all the blockhouses in the periphery of Javor, he took Novibazar and

then marched on in a westerly direction in order to effect a junction with the Montenegrins under General Voukovitch.

The Turkish tactics up to this point were certainly inexplicable. Vigorous and determined as was the resistance offered by the Arnauts, scarcely sufficient use was made of their fine fighting qualities. These stalwart highlanders, to whom guerilla warfare is the highest kind of sport, with more encouragement might easily have trebled the Servian losses, and all know how demoralizing this *franc-tireur* warfare can be, especially on a conscript army. There can be little doubt that the policy of "Ottomanization," or, in other words, the bludgeoning and dragooning in which the Young Turks indulged, so different to the régime of Abdul Hamid, must have been largely responsible for this lack of zeal among the men themselves. It was difficult, moreover, to see why Zeki Pasha allowed this successful convergence of the three lines. Marshal Benedek threw away the battle of Koenigratz by allowing the Red Prince, Frederick Charles, to force a junction with the Crown Prince of Prussia who had come through the Moravian passes, instead of checking the one and hurling his vastly superior main army on the other. Yet Zeki Pasha was apparently content to allow three columns to move down upon his troops, who were inferior in

number to at least two of them singly. It is true, certainly, that for a day or two he held Kumanovo against the Crown Prince alone, but it was the opportune sound of Stepanovitch's guns which turned a Servian retreat into a Servian victory.

On the Monday evening advance posts reported that the Turks were massed in strength at Kumanovo, and it was soon evident that serious fighting lay ahead.

The position of Kumanovo is one of great natural strength. Across the entire front from west to east runs the river Golemar, which, though fordable, constitutes a formidable obstacle to the manœuvring of troops. From the river south-west the ground rises, mounting 320 feet in three miles, thus providing a glaxis-like slope in front of the Turkish works, across which the defenders had an excellent field of fire and which they had strengthened with redoubts, field-works and shelter-trenches. Forming as it did the extreme northern lines of an army posted to defend Uskub, Kumanovo commanded the road and the village of Lopata, at which point the railway line crosses the river, while it also covered the road and railway running southwards, along which two avenues the provision of supplies or an orderly retreat are alone possible. The Turkish position stretched for about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles east and west of Sarimase, while its left flank lay on the



Sophie Jovanovitch, whose father on his death-bed made her swear in case of war against the oppressing Turks, she would fight. King Peter gave her permission to become a Comitadige, and she has fought in three battles, throwing bombs which she carries in her belt.



foothills which culminate in the great Kara Dagħ peak about 5,000 feet high. The attack was opened in the middle of the afternoon in pouring rain and dense fog which made it impossible for either force to ascertain the strength of the enemy. The Turks initiated a series of small demonstrations in an attempt to learn at which point the Servians had massed their main force, but the latter screened their real strength by delivering at rare intervals a spasmodic and broken fire. Early next morning both armies indulged in a heavy artillery duel in which the Creusots very soon proved superior. It was remarked on all sides that the Turkish shrapnel failed to explode, and quite a number of the wounded complained only of severe contusions which were caused either by the men being struck by the mass of earth thrown against them when the shrapnel buried itself in the ground a few paces ahead, or by the spent and unexploded cases striking them in the knapsack or cartridge pouches. As soon as the Servians had silenced the Turkish artillery the infantry was sent forward to take the trenches by assault, but the rifle fire was too deadly, and on three or four occasions they were driven back with loss. Later on in the day, however, the artillery rendered some of the outer positions untenable and a further infantry charge resulted in the capture of two of the most important

earthworks. About 8.0 p.m. next evening the Turks took advantage of a brilliant moonlight and advanced on a counter attack, which was so successful that the Crown Prince was advised by his staff to give the order to retire. He asked for ten minutes' grace, and before that ten minutes had expired, he heard the booming of Stepanovitch's guns far on his left flank. This decided the battle. Caught between two fires, decimated by the deadly accuracy of the Schneiders, the Ottoman forces were compelled to retire. On the Thursday morning the Servian cavalry made a long détour and swept down upon the enemy as they were beginning to retire through the rearward passes, and also forcing them to evacuate a strong position which they had taken up and from which they could command the village with artillery fire. This brilliant cavalry action, which was led by Prince Arsene himself, completed the work which had been begun by the artillery. The infantry were again ordered to advance, and this time they swept the trenches and earthworks clear of the enemy and dashed on into the village itself, though it is a moot point whether they or some cavalry patrols were the first to enter. Some heavy street fighting took place in the little villages to the rear, Barcali and Chirkissocolo, but the end was not far off, and by 5.0 in the evening the Turks were in full retreat down the road to Uskub.

Only later was it known that there had been grave dissension among the Ottoman Staff. Several officers accused Zeki Pasha of conduct which was tantamount to fostering a retreat, and had urged him to rally the forces at Kolnik, and if unsuccessful there, fall back on Uskub on one flank and force a general engagement on Outche Polya. All this, however, belongs to later history. But there was sufficient proof on all sides of the hopeless mismanagement and lack of organization in the Turkish army. Swords and bayonets which one could pick up by the handful could never have seen a grindstone for years. The rifles were a curious collection of mixed types and patterns; in fact, the battlefield was not unlike a vast rag and bone shop.

Despite this, however, the Turks fought bravely enough until their leaders showed signs of flinching. Even the Servians put the Turkish regular strength at only three divisions strong, so that they were hopelessly outnumbered. The losses were about equal, some 5,000 killed and wounded on either side.

The first great victory had fallen to the Servians; and now all eyes were turned towards the objective of their strategy, the centre of all their aspirations, Uskub. At this juncture, however, they learnt the first tidings of any action of the irregular bands, who had been expected to lend such valuable assist-



ance. It seemed that on Saturday a Turkish force advancing northwards to relieve Djuma-i-Bala, entered the pass apparently unaware that it was beset by some 2,000 insurgents. On reaching the bridge over the Struma at the foot of the pass the Turks were suddenly attacked by the insurgents, who charged with bombs and succeeded in blowing up the bridge. Great confusion followed; many Turks were drowned in the river, and some 1,000 officers and men and three Krupp guns and one machine gun were captured. The prisoners were conducted to Kotcharinvo, on the frontier, and will arrive here to-morrow. This remarkable exploit was planned and carried out by the Voivoda Dontcho, the famous "King of Pirin." His despatches stated that the Turks, retreating in the Razlog district, had committed terrible outrages, and contained a long list of massacred persons, including priests, women, and children.



Servian Infantry bivouacs outside Uskub. Part of Yankovitch's army.



## CHAPTER X

### THE SERVIAN ADVANCE (*continued*)

ALL eyes were now turned on Uskub, the capital of the ancient Servian Empire, in which their great Tsar, Stephen Dushan, was crowned Emperor of the Greeks, Bulgarians and Servians on Easter Day, 1346. At Kumanovo, the first serious engagement of the campaign, the Turks had at last given a sample of their old fighting qualities, and the desperate courage shown in defence of that village, which might be regarded as the first line of the Uskub defences, was a foretaste of what might be expected. The next barrier in the path of the Crown Prince and General Stepanovitch, who had effected their junction at such a critical moment, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, was the Kolnik salient which, rising to a height of 2,000 feet, lay right across the Servian path. Once that had been won, the victorious Serbs could look down on Uskub nestling in the Vardar valley  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles away, but the remembrance of how the Turks had built the fortifications of

Plevna in three days gave pause for thought, and people wondered how many lives would be laid down before the Servian flag once again flew over the historic town. One question engaged general attention. Granted that the Servians, after hard fighting, took the salient, which formed, as it were, the second line of defence, what would be the Turkish tactics when they found themselves driven back on Uskub itself? Would Zeki Pasha use or abuse his fortress? Would he employ it as a pivot for the operations of his mobile force, or would he lock himself up behind a maze of redoubts and entrenchments and repeat the sullen dogged resistance which shattered the brilliant genius of Gourko and Skobeloff?

Throughout Saturday, October 26, the tension in Belgrade was extreme. Then suddenly came the dramatic news that Uskub had surrendered without firing a shot. The foreign consuls had gone out to meet the Crown Prince and requested him to enter and protect the Ottoman subjects in case of disorder.

At first it seemed too good to be true. That the Turks would allow the Servian army to march into Uskub as if they were engaged in a mere procession was incredible. That the Kolnik heights should not be defended was curious enough, but Uskub itself, the key and capital of Old Servia—no,

there must be some mistake. So argued the people, but the arrival of telegram after telegram convinced them of the good tidings. The excitement in the capital and throughout Servia on the reception of this news beggared description. The stern fighting at Kumanovo and the brilliant Bulgarian victory at Kirk Kilisse paled in importance before this bloodless occupation. The mournful dirges which describe the fatal 15th of June, 1889, when Bayazid the Thunderbolt led the Turks to victory on Korsovo, were now chanted in victory :—

“ There resteth to Servia a glory,  
A glory that shall not grow old ;  
There remaineth to Servia a story,  
A tale to be chanted and told ;  
They are gone to their graves grim and gory,  
The beautiful, brave and bold.”

The disastrous day had been atoned for : the glory was now truly Servian.

Probably it will be a long time before the world receives a true explanation of this strange move on the part of Zeki Pasha. There is no doubt that the numbers attributed to him at the outset were grossly exaggerated, as only Turkish figures can be. He may have had no more than four divisions (48,000 men). The political quarrels and the constant intrigues of the Committee of Union and Progress had doubtless effected the discipline of his men. But they must have known that the evacu-

ation of Uskub was an outward and visible sign that Turkish rule in Macedonia had gone for ever, and it is indeed curious that they did not strike a single blow to maintain their military prestige, if with little hope of success, at least *pour encourager les Arméens*.

An utter riot seems to have started in the Turkish Western Army. The retreat from Uskub degenerated into a *sauve qui peut*. Turkish soldiers, even Turkish officers, fought with one another to secure places in the train which was to bear them southwards. Guns, ammunition, tents, provisions, and, alas! standards were abandoned in the *débâcle*. Djavid Pasha, the commander of the Monastir corps, who had won an unenviable notoriety for the cruelty with which he had suppressed the Albanian revolution of 1911, was said to have been killed by a Turkish officer for wishing to stay on and defend the town to the bitter end. It was a shameful spectacle, and one which the Turks will remember as a blot on their military reputation for many a long day.

A few of the more determined officers, among them most of the group which had advocated remaining on the heights of Kara Dag after the retreat from Kumanovo, took up their position on the plateau of Ovtche Polya, while the main force retired on Monastir.



A magnificent specimen (70 years of age) of a Servian Comitadji volunteer, bands of which are roaming the Balkans attacking the Albanian bands which have always caused such trouble



2

In the meantime the Servian army was confronted with the task of restoring order in Uskub. A massacre of Christians had been openly discussed by the rabble in the bazaar for some days. The news of the Servian victory at Kumanovo came as a thunderbolt, and the low-class Mohammedans at once feared some reprisal on the part of the Christian population. The Tziganes started looting the shops, and were only stopped by some Frenchmen, who acted as self-constituted police. Disorders broke out in the Albanian quarter, and the Vali who drove down to quell the riot, narrowly escaped assassination, and had to take refuge in the Russian Consulate. His secretary sitting beside him was killed. The consuls in full uniform then went into the crowd, preceded by their kavasses fully armed, and asked the Albanians to respect the white flag. They obtained assurances on this point and then went off to meet the Servians, whose timely arrival undoubtedly prevented serious trouble. But for a moment they could do little: it was necessary to ensure the military position.

The Crown Prince Alexander, hearing that a stand was being made at Ovtche Polya, where all had expected a pitched battle, advanced, and after some sharp fighting forced the Turks to withdraw. Unhappily, the rank and file had not the enthusiasm

of those few loyal officers, and once the retreat had begun, soon broke into disorder. The Servian cavalry, which had so far, save at Kumanovo, done little in the campaign owing to the broken nature of the country, now had their chance, and sweeping down on the Turkish flank completely penetrated the retiring column. The sabre completed the work of the rifle. The cavalry re-formed and charged again and again, and it was only when the tail of the Turkish force had reached the pass that the murderous work was over. It was thought that the Ottoman Western force was finally smashed, and although Zeki might be able to take to the mountains and by a judicious mixture of Fabian and *franc-tireur* methods cause considerable annoyance, the allies might regard any big scheme of operations as out of the question.

Ninety-eight guns, eighteen howitzers, quantities of ammunition, a train equipped with all apparatus and machinery necessary for bridge-building, were included in the spoil captured at Uskub. The retreat had been so hasty that although the bridge over the river was mined, no one had thought of firing the fuse. The railway was intact, save for a few metres to the north, and within twenty-four hours an engine had run up between Uskub and Ristovatz. The next day Yankovitch's army came up from the West, and it was known that Gilane

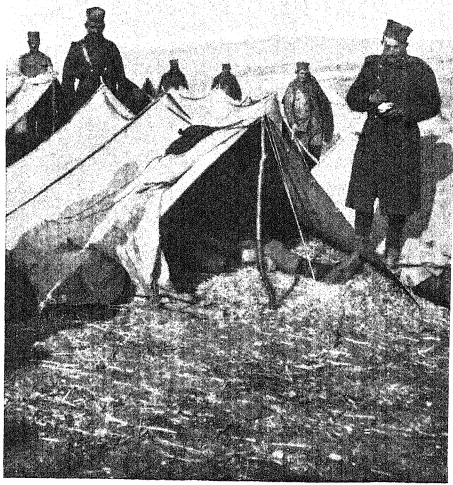
and Ferizovitch had also fallen into the hands of the Servians.

At this juncture a large number of Turkish prisoners were liberated, and given proclamations printed in Turkish, Greek, Bulgarian and Servian, announcing the arrival of the Servian army as the liberator of the distressed peoples, with the promise of a régime based on equality and fraternity. Bombastic and platitudinous though such a document may seem, it undoubtedly had a very useful effect, and the Arnants, who by now were temporarily tired of war, came pouring in, promising fidelity to their new ruler. It is a curious reflection on the local estimation of Servian courage as well as a one-sided compliment on their new-born efficiency that on all sides the Arnauts were convinced that they had been opposing the entire Russian army.

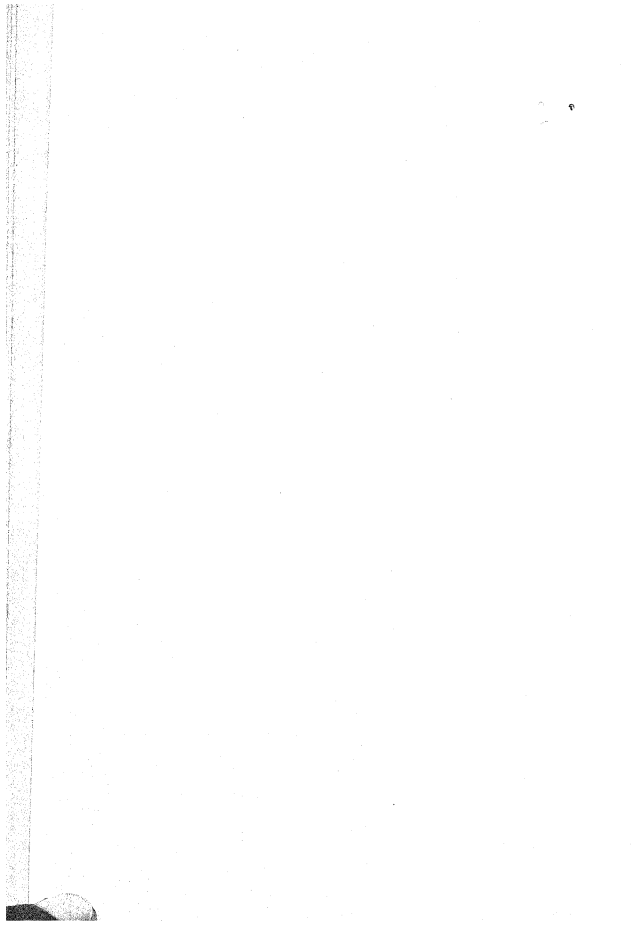
The position of the allies was now extremely strong. The three main armies had converged. During the advance on Uskub, General Zivkovitch had continued his march westwards with the Ibar army and had joined hands with the Montenegrins at Sienitza. His pacification of the Albanians up in that corner had been facilitated by the co-operation of some comitadjis—the only district in which the Servian bands were ever heard of—and the *battue* instituted in the Sandjok had been extremely successful. Priepolye, the last Ottoman

post in the Sandjok, had fallen. Ipek was now being threatened. The Greeks were coming up from the south-west. It now only remained to locate where Zeki Pasha was attempting to concentrate his few remaining forces. Monastir certainly seemed the most likely rallying point, but it was rumoured that another part had fallen back from Kuprulu along the railway line, instead of marching across country from there to Monastir. It was obvious that by this move they hoped to get into Salonika before they were cut off by the Greeks from the south. In any case, however, this attempt was useless, since the brilliant advance of the Bulgarians, who had occupied Dimotika, had completely isolated Salonika from Constantinople. Up in the Monastir mountains they would at least have some scope for a guerilla warfare.

The tactics which the three converging columns had adopted in their advance from their frontier headquarters were now repeated in slightly different forms further south. The organized beat for Turkish troops was extended fanwise on a broader front instead of narrowing, as the generals reached their objective. At the same time the division of the Servian forces into three armies was discontinued. Five divisions of first-line troops were formed under the Crown Prince, with Yankovitch as his colleague, while Stepanovitch was placed in



Servian bivouac tents ; each man carries a waterproof sheet, three of which go to make a tent, when laced together ; straw is plentiful.



charge of a rearguard composed of three second-line divisions who would guard the communications and supply wastage. The order was then given to advance; but at the eleventh hour this formation had to be altered. The Bulgarians had failed in their direct assault on Adrianople and had decided to invest the fortress and reduce it by starvation. A Servian first-line division was ordered to reinforce the investing army and the Timok division was chosen for the work, and the remaining four divisions started on the beat southwards. Particular attention was paid to the left flank, on which three divisions were operating. Patrols reported that the enemy were located in small numbers at Kuprulu and Ishtip. From that moment the operations are merely a mechanical repetition of successes. Both at Kuprulu and Ishtip there was a little fighting, followed by the retreat of the Turks and the capture of a certain number of guns, tents, etc. The column then swung inwards and moved on Prilep. A precisely similar line of action was adopted on the right flank, which followed up a course which some of the retreating Turks were supposed to have taken. One division occupied Tetovo (or Kalkandele) and after pushing on to Djakovo and Prisrend which, after a stout resistance, owing to the large proportion of Albanians in the town, had been taken by a division detailed for



that purpose by Yankovitch after the fall of Ferisovitch. The forces then united and turned southwards to Gostivar, which they reached on the same day as the left flank came down to Prilep.

During this period very little had been heard of Zivkovitch and the Ibar army after it had joined the Montenegrins, but at last news came that the combined troops had taken Ipek. The Greeks were known to be close to the sea coast, but it was not quite certain whether they would advance direct on Salonika or turn up the Varda valley and effect a junction with their Slavonic allies. The cordon was drawing tight now. Monastir was the last place of any importance left to the Turk in Macedonia. Would he shut himself up among the craggy fastnesses that overlook the town, or make one last desperate sally and try to break through the chain of armies that encircled him?

Such was the position after the first fourteen days of the campaign, during which only one engagement of any importance had been fought. The wildest enthusiast could scarcely have ventured to predict such a complete Ottoman *débâcle*. Save for Kumanovo, the campaign resembled a military promenade rather than an inter-racial struggle. The history of past wars has shown that despite the notorious incapacity of the Turks in organization, their magnificent qualities as soldiers had never

shone so brightly as in the hour of defeat. The tale of this black fortnight in Macedonia, however, made one question whether these qualities have not been sapped by the sinister rule of the Union and Progress Committee. A glance at a map showing the Servian advance and occupation of Macedonia on October 16 and on October 31, illustrates more strikingly than anything else the facility with which an Empire which had been won by a series of bloody battles was frittered away in a few days.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE OPERATIONS FROM THE BULGARIAN SIDE

#### THE RIVAL ARMIES

**A**LTHOUGH war was not declared until October 17, the military operations may be said to have begun on September 30 when mobilization was ordered by the allied States and Montenegro. On the following day, Turkey responded by a similar measure. The various stages that have to be followed between the order to mobilize and the battles that decide wars, are as follows :—

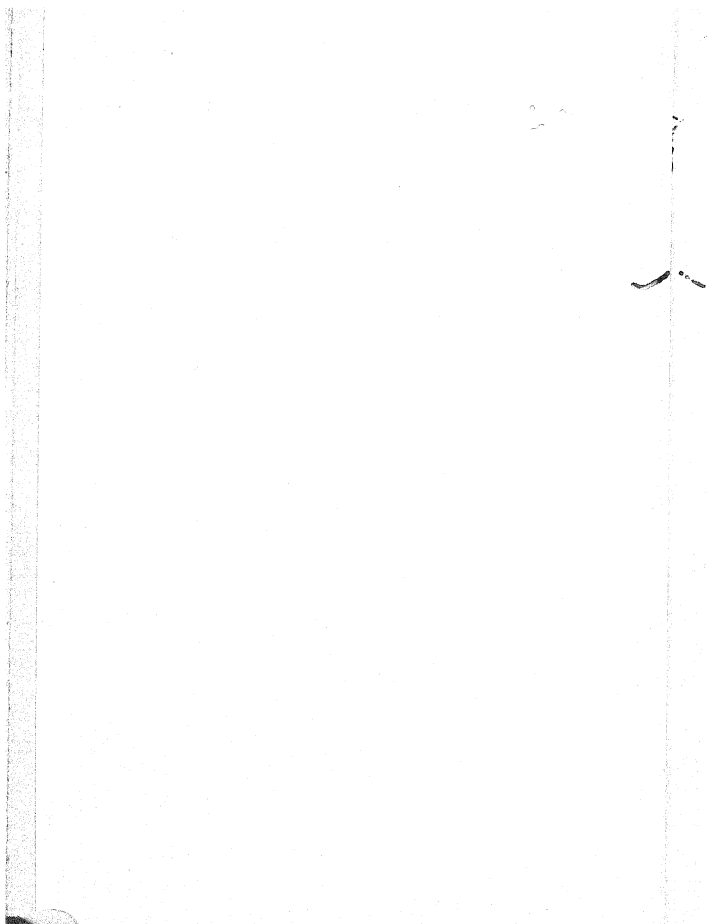
(1) *Mobilization*, when units receive their reservists and pass from a peace footing to that of war.

(2) *Concentration*, when the various mobilized units form the groups or armies and move to the frontier.

(3) The forward movement of the groups or armies in accordance with the strategical scheme of the leader.



Dead Arnauts, killed on the road and kicked into the ditch.



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The history of all recent wars has tended to show that the final issue of the conflict is very greatly affected, if not indeed decided, by the smoothness and rapidity with which these three initial steps are carried out.

The details of the forces of the two main antagonists are as follows :—

**BULGARIA.**—The army is organized in nine divisions, one cavalry division, and a proportion of Army Troops. The peace headquarters of the Divisions are :—

*Southern Bulgaria :* Sofia (1st Division), Dubnitsa (7th Division), Philippopolis (2nd Division), Stara Zagora (8th Division), Sliven (3rd Division).

*Northern Bulgaria :* Vrotsa (6th Division), Plevna (9th Division), Rustchuk (5th Division), Shumla (4th Division).

In war each division expands at its own centre into :—

270 officers,	{	2 squadrons Divisional Cavalry,
19,000 rank and file,		2 Infantry Brigades, each
36 guns.		2 regiments of 4 battalions,
		9 batteries Field Artillery,
		3 companies Engineers.

The cavalry division expands into four regiments of four squadrons (5,000 men).

The Army Troops consist of—

about 140 guns, 9,000 men.	{	12 batteries Mountain Artillery, 20 Howitzer Batteries, 1 telegraph battalion, 1 railway battalion, 1 balloon and aeroplane section.
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Behind these *first-line* troops are nine reserve brigades of similar composition to the other brigades, and lastly the *Opulchenie* or landsturm including all men up to forty-six years of age.

The service is universal and compulsory, and the total number of armed men is some 460,000—roughly one-tenth of the whole population.

**TURKEY.**—The military organization of Turkey requires more detailed description, for to its failing will probably be traced a large share of the disasters to the army in the field.

When fully mobilized the organization provided for 106 divisions and fourteen cavalry brigades. The unit of war was the army corps of one division of first-line troops (or *Nizam*) and one division of second-line troops (or *Redif*). The organization aimed at thirty-eight such army corps, with twenty divisions surplus for work behind the field armies. But of these army corps only seven were in Turkey-in-Europe. The others were in Asia. A system

whereby first-line units and second-line units are organized together can never be sound. But this was not the only point of weakness of the Turkish organization. One of the results of the Young Turks' efforts to reform the Army had been to replace large numbers of the subordinate officers promoted from the ranks by young men educated at primary schools. The reform aimed at a higher standard of education and intelligence in the officers' rank, and had a full measure of time been allowed and had the alteration been made gradually it might have been successful. But it was introduced wholesale and consequently the link of confidence between the rank and file and the officers was broken. An even greater evil than either of these was the extension of the law of military service to include Christians. By this Christian and Moslem fought side by side and neither had any trust in the other, and there is little doubt that this was largely responsible for some of the outbreak of panic.

The theoretical strength of the units of the Turkish Army was :—

*Cavalry Brigade* : 1,600 sabres with eight artillery guns.

*Division* (Nizam first-line), 8,000 rifles, 24,936 guns.

*Division* (Redif), 7,000–9,500 rifles, 24,836 guns



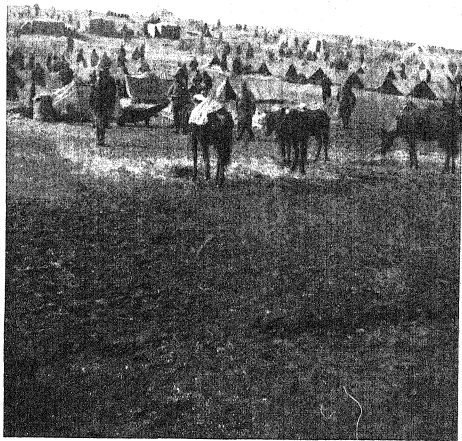
The actual units in Turkey-in-Europe and its mobilization when ordered was :—

	Men.	Guns.
8 cavalry brigades . . .	16,000	—
22 Divisions . . .	23,000	700
11 Redif „ (embodied)	100,000	350

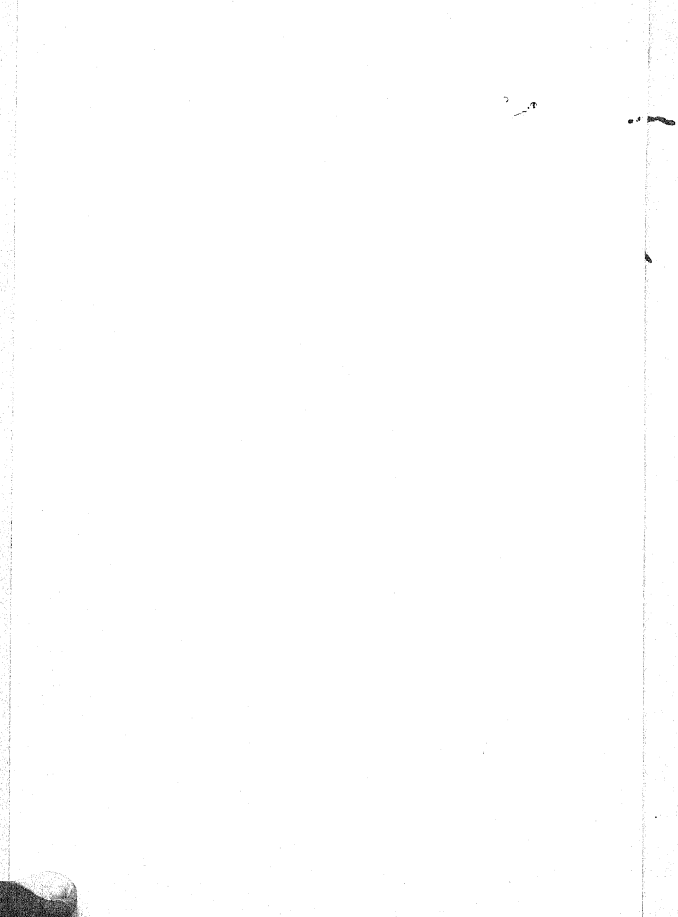
Taking the whole armed strength of Turkey as fourteen cavalry brigades and 101 divisions, on this theoretical establishment, the total becomes some 22,000 sabres and 800,000 infantry, with some 200,000 trained but unorganized reserves; but at the time mobilization was ordered not more than three-fifths of the total infantry were actually available.

Turkey, moreover, had not been able to adopt a territorial system of organization for the army; reservists to complete the units in Europe had to come from the distant recruiting areas of Asia.

It will be seen then that whereas the arrangement for mobilization and concentration of Servia and Bulgaria, and to a less extent of Greece, proceeded by perfectly logical and simple steps from the peasant reservist tilling the field until the moment when battle was joined, that of Turkey was complicated and incomplete. It would be straining the point to trace to this the full measure of Turkey's mishaps. The military history of our own Empire provides abundant instances of wars



Servian Infantry bivouacs outside Uskub. Another view.



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when defective peace arrangements have in the end been overcome and favourable issue has been achieved. But it is certain that defective mobilization and concentration are a very severe handicap to any armed force.

The following table gives an approximation of the armed strength of the belligerents as far as present information goes :—

	Rifles.			Guns.	Sabres.
	1st Line.	2nd Line.	3rd Line.		
BULGARIA .	180,000	90,000	190,000	660	5,000
SERVIA . .	140,000	50,000	60,000	500	2,000
GREECE . .	136,000	—	—	500	500
					(?)
	456,000	140,000	250,000		
Total	846,000			1,660	7,500
TURKEY (in Europe) .	230,000	100,000	200,000	1,050	16,000
TURKEY (in Asia) . .	80,000	120,000		300	6,000
	310,000	220,000	200,000		
Total .	730,000			1,350	22,000

## STRATEGICAL PROBLEMS

The possibility of war in the Balkans had attracted the closest attention of the army staffs of Europe. Probably every War Office had in its possession, carefully prepared estimates of the resources of each country and forecasts of the probable course of operations. No doubt these estimates and forecasts affected the diplomatic action of the Great Powers. It is easy to be wise after the event. Critics will soon be found to lay their fingers on the causes of Turkish defeat, but, however right these critics may be, it is an interesting fact that the consensus of military opinion prior to the war was almost unanimous that victory, sooner or later, would rest with the Turks. Nor was the opinion difficult to justify by calculation of various obvious factors which go to success in war. The Bulgarians, though they had fought well on behalf of Russia in 1877, and although they had been successful in the small war against Servia, had given little evidence of the military qualities which they were now to reveal. It was known that the Bulgarian forces were not trained or equipped up to anything approaching modern European standards. The mental level of the Bulgarian peasant was known to be low and the poverty of the country had prevented preparations being carried further than those mere necessities.

The military history of the Servians gave even less cause to anticipate military virtues. The character of the nation was known to be somewhat flamboyant. In the war against Bulgaria they had rendered a poor account of themselves. The Greeks had little better recommendations. Only a few years ago they had been driven in headlong flight by the Turks. The Turks, on the other hand, had been known to have devoted large sums of money to the fostering of their military organization, and they called in expert advice from the greatest military nation in Europe; and the Moslem Empire, however incapable of civil government, had always shown aptitude for military enterprise.

In addition to these considerations of relative military virtues, the strategical theatre appeared, on the whole, to offer advantages to the Turks. Their capital lay at the extreme eastern end of Europe. Access to it was limited to a narrow peninsula, across which had been erected the celebrated Tchataldja lines. Further to the west they had prepared the quadrilateral of fortresses, Adrianople, Kirk Kilisse, Lule Burgas, Dimotika, within and behind which they confidently anticipated being able to concentrate their army before the blow of the allies could reach them. From this quadrilateral, direct

access—guarded on the northern side, by the formidable obstacles of the Balkan Mountains, and on the southern side by the Rhodope Mountains or Despoto Dagh—ran to Philippopolis and Sofia, both of which were unprotected by modern fortifications. It was hardly possible for the allies in the initial stages of the war to concentrate the Servian and the Grecian armies to the assistance of the Bulgarians. A successful blow delivered at Bulgaria would in all probability have been fatal to the alliance, and for the sake of such a blow Turkey should have been prepared to have sacrificed both troops and territory in either theatre. To use military parlance, Turkey appeared to have all the advantages of interior lines. The Bulgarian Headquarters are believed not to have omitted from their calculations the possibility of some such development as that indicated above, and in this contingency they are understood to have been prepared to sacrifice temporarily the province of Eastern Rumelia and to concentrate their troops at or near Tirnova, north of the Balkan range, whence they could have offered formidable menace to the flank of the Turkish advance. The actual solution of the broad strategical problem was probably largely influenced by political considerations. It was felt that to preserve the enthusiasm of the allies, the efforts of

each would have to be directed towards those areas wherein lay their political aspirations. More than this, Bulgaria, probably again for political considerations, proved herself ready to sacrifice from the decisive theatre in Rumelia and Thrace some portion of her troops to operate in co-operation with the Servians towards Uskub in Old Serbia. The actual plan in broad outline adopted by the allies became then the following :—

In the far east the major portion of the Bulgarian army was entrusted with the task of making headway against the Turkish chief forces and of breaking through the quadrilateral round Adrianople and Lule Burgas.

In the western theatre, as we have seen, a converging attack was to be delivered viâ Novibazar and Vranja by the Servians, and viâ Kustendil by the Bulgarians, on Uskub and thence towards Salonika. Simultaneous with this attack, a small body of Servians was entrusted with the task of clearing the Turks out of the Sandjak and of working towards the ports on the Adriatic.

On the Grecian frontier, the objectives became Janina and Salonika.

But however important the operations in the western theatres may have been to the Powers to whom they were entrusted, it was inevitable from the moment that the first shot was fired, that the



main issue would be in Rumelia and Thrace. Success in this area would be decisive to the fate of either the Moslem Empire or the Balkan League.

#### BULGARIAN PLAN

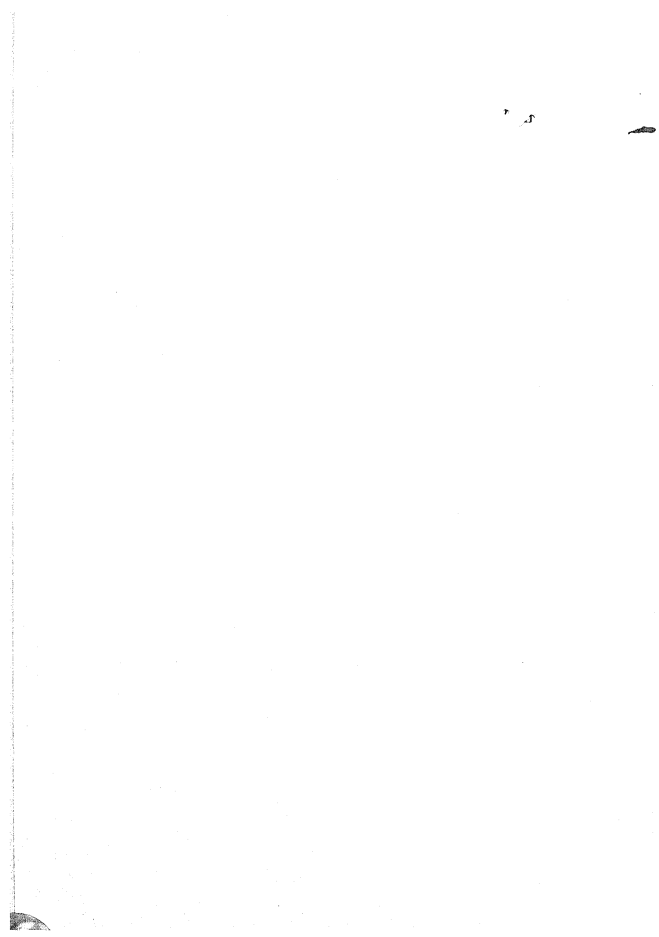
The history of the initial Bulgarian operations is still to some extent shrouded in mystery. It is believed that the Bulgarian Staff had adopted, as their main plan, the movement of the bulk of their forces along the Maritza towards Adrianople, while the small forces were designed to co-operate from Yamboli either against Kirk Kilisse or to penetrate the quadrilateral to that place and Adrianople. But if this plan was ever really accepted by the Bulgarian General Staff, the advent of General Savoff to supreme power caused the acceptance of one based upon a much bolder and far-seeing strategical conception. It is believed that Savoff argued to himself that to devote the main portion of his forces to a direct attack on Adrianople from the west could only result in prolonged delay, possibly in siege operations, and would thus afford time to the Turkish main forces to complete their concentration. It would in fact, he argued, have lost to the Bulgarians all the advantages of the initiative, and the alternative plan which he accepted and on which the Bulgarian armies operated, was to



A team of six horses which escaped with their drivers 400 yards, and were then caught by the shrapnel. The drivers' bodies have been removed.



Small portion of enormous quantities of soldiers' clothing captured at fall of Uskub.



move the bulk of the forces from the Maritza, north to the Yamboli line, whence they should strike south and south-east, while only two divisions, supported by a certain number of reserve troops, should advance via the Maritza, to hold in check any offensive movement westwards by the Turks and to divert their attention to the main operations. But before this plan could be given effect to, it was essential that the sharp salient which penetrates into Eastern Roumelia, due south of Philippopolis, and up to a distance of some twenty miles from the railway line, should be cleared of all hostile troops. Consequently a still further detachment had to be made from the Bulgarian main army, and it was this detachment which in point of fact fought the first action of the war in the vicinity of Tomrush.

It is an interesting commentary on the statement so prevalent in modern military historians that the movement of large bodies of troops cannot be concealed, to note that in point of fact from October 2 till 24 the actual location of the Bulgarian troops was unknown, not only to the Turks who were their enemies, not only to Europe who were interested onlookers, but even to the Bulgarians themselves who were not actually with the forces. How far the course of the eventual operations had been foreseen by the Bulgarian Headquarters

cannot at present be known. It is believed that General Savoff confidently anticipated that after the fall of Kirk Kilisse, the fate of Adrianople would be sealed by a converging attack in overwhelming forces from west, north and east. It is known that the Bulgarians were prepared to sacrifice in this effort at least 20,000 men, a loss which the importance of obtaining direct railway communication from Bulgaria to the far east of Turkey would well have justified.

#### BRIEF DIARY OF THE OPERATIONS

On September 30 the three allied States and Montenegro ordered the mobilization of their forces. It was estimated by competent foreign opinion that this mobilization (*that is*, the reception of reservists and the passing from units, at their own station, from a peace to a war footing) would require at least six days, but the event proved that the enthusiasm of the people enabled this period to be greatly reduced. On October 2 the units in Sofia were practically complete, and late in the evening of that day the first of them began to leave for the front. The scenes both at the capital and in the country, during this mobilization, gave instance of the vitalizing effect of a national cause. The actual procedure of calling up reservists was effected solely by the posting of



Some of the 80,000 rifles captured during Turkish flight from Kumanovo and Uskub.



notices on the churches and public buildings found in the remotest villages. It is probably no exaggeration to say that within twelve hours of the posting of these notices, the whole male population liable to arms were already on its way to their centres. Civil traffic had, some days previously, been suspended on the railways. No attempt was made to allocate such train service as still ran to particular units ; no tickets were issued. It is doubtful even if systematic time-tables had been prepared, but the goodwill and enthusiasm of both officials and people took the place of ordered method. Each train ran, crammed to its utmost capacity, not only inside but even on the roofs of the carriages. Each man had with him sufficient food, taken from his own home, for the journey, and no attempt was made to supplement this by any State organization. On the roads long streams of country carts, with bullocks or horses, poured in towards the centres. The daily march of these was never less than twenty-eight miles. Although the enthusiasm was intense, it was severely restrained, and found small expression in either songs or cheering such as we would expect in Western Europe.

By October 7 the concentration of the whole of the Bulgarian forces towards the frontier was well under way, both by road and rail. The actual



order of battle is believed to have been, as follows :—

1st ARMY : *General Ivanoff* (concentrating at Harmenli), consisting of 1st, 2nd and 7th Divisions (with a detachment sent south from Philippopolis towards Kavalla).

2nd ARMY : *General Radko Dimitrieff*, concentrating at Yamboli, 3rd, 4th, 8th Divisions and Cavalry Division.

3rd ARMY : *General Kuvetcheff* (following 2nd Army), 5th and 9th Divisions.

Detachment concentrating at Kustendil to co-operate with Servians against Uskub—6th Division.

It was on this date that the Austro-Russian note, representing the views of the concert of Europe, was presented to the Allies, and five days afterwards the Allies presented their joint demands to Turkey which proclaimed the war inevitable. It is now known that the concentration at Yamboli of the main portion of the Bulgarian army was actually completed by about October 15, and that the troops moved on to the frontier at Constantinovo, Derekoj and Beleron. At the same time on the southern line, detrainment was completed

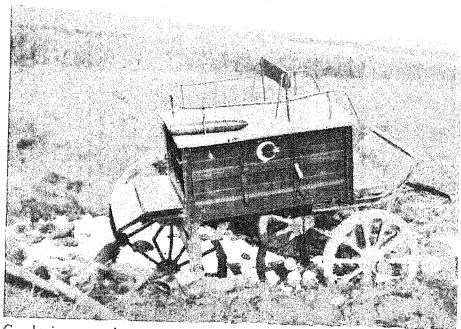
at Harmenli, and by October 17 the whole of the Bulgarian forces were ready for the advance. On the 17th war was declared. Early in the morning of the following day the Allies crossed the frontier and Mustapha Pasha and the important bridge over the Maritza were captured by the Bulgarians. On the 19th in the far north-east Goektepe fell, and three days later Tirnovadzik was in the possession of the Bulgarians. On the Maritza line the advance was continued slowly from Mustapha Pasha towards Adrianople. There was no desire in this quarter to force the pace, for it was necessary to give time to the northern column to deliver its blow at Kirk Kilisse. On October 23 the Bulgarian forces were in close contact with the Turks at Kirk Kilisse, and there was continuous fighting for the whole of that afternoon and night. It was said that General Savoff had issued an order to General Dimitrieff, who commanded the forces acting against Kirk Kilisse, that the place must be taken on the following day, and on the 24th the whole of the Bulgarian infantry were launched in one continuous and eventually successful assault. On the 24th also a determined attack was delivered both viâ the Maritza and the Tundja on Adrianople. A small column, crossing the Arda near Doghanja Arazi, penetrated north-east as far as Chorekkeui, within a mile and a half of the railway on the Ma-

ritza bank. A column seized possession of a small work at Hodinkeui and moved forward into close conflict with the main line of forts at Tchataldja. The attack viâ the Tundja Valley deployed from the right bank of the river eastwards as far as the Adrianople-Kirk Kilisse road. It drove in the Turkish outposts, captured their small outlying works, and by evening had reached the general line Havaras-Arrant-keui-Musubeili. On the following day the assault on the fortress was renewed, but though some small advance was made, it became evident that there was small hope of carrying the fortress by direct assault. Late in the evening of that day the Turks attempted a strong counterstroke to recover the outworks near Arreut-keui. It achieved some measure of temporary success, but was eventually driven back with heavy losses.

It is well to consider now the situation at this stage, for the issue of the war was practically sealed. The quadrilateral on which Turkey had based most of its hopes had given way at its northern angle, and its western angle was closely invested. Railway communication from Turkey to Macedonia and to the western theatres was intercepted. To make head against the Bulgarian lines, which now stretched nearly due east and west, between Adrianople and Kirk Kilisse, the Turks had to seek



Finest quarter in Uskub on right bank of Vardar River. The Russian Consulate is here.



Caught in retreat by a creusot shell, which struck the back of the caisson.

c  
c

to readjust their plans. They might either face north, perpendicular to their main line of supplies, and endeavour to drive the Bulgarians back to the north or north-west. In military parlance the Turks would, in this situation, have had to fight a battle facing to their flank. As an alternative to this they might withdraw all or most of their troops from their left or western wing, concentrate and attempt to recapture Kirk Kilisse, and re-establish the quadrilateral. Or, as a still further alternative, they might withdraw to the vicinity of Lule Burgas, and there await the Bulgarian advance. In many ways it was a choice of evils, and until we know more fully to what extent the Turkish preparations had advanced at this period it is unjust to criticize. But on broad strategical principles, it would appear to have been the direct course for Turkey to have sought to resume the offensive towards Kirk Kilisse. The losses no doubt would have been enormous and the prospects of decisive success perhaps small, but on the other hand even modified success or a drawn battle would have gained for the Turks valuable time and have restored the morale of their troops.

On the Bulgarian side the alternatives were either to renew the attack on Adrianople and to sacrifice more men in the hope that the fall of this place would facilitate and accelerate the eventual

advance eastwards, *or*, masking Adrianople, to launch their main columns, with the support of the railway, south-east and south from Kirk Kilisse in an attempt to intercept the Turkish main forces from their capital and to bring about another Sedan.

Of these alternatives the Turks appear, on their side, to have attempted a compromise between the offensive towards Kirk Kilisse and the retreat towards Lule Burgas; and the Bulgarians to have adopted the more virile policy of attempting to intercept the Turkish army from Constantinople.

The area over which the succeeding operations were to take place has been likened to Salisbury Plain. There are successive long ridges, running generally north and south. Immediately east of Kirk Kilisse there is an isolated hill on which stands the Turkish Uskub or Scopo: from this the stream Monastirdest runs south through sparsely-wooded country to the village of Lule Burgas, and about two miles further south passes under the railway line and joins the Ergeni river. The main ridge to the east of this watercourse runs through Bunar-Hissar some twenty miles eastward of Kirk Kilisse. The advance of General Dimitrieff's army from Kirk Kilisse commenced on October 26 on a very broad front. The right wing marched south-eastwards on both sides of the

line Yenidge-Baba Eski. The central columns advanced against the line Baba Eski-Lule Burgas, while the extreme left column of about two divisions advanced viâ Bunar-Hissar-Visa and Sarai against the Lule Burgas-Tchorlu road. It is believed that the Bulgarian General Staff hoped by this method to drive the Turks from their line of communication towards Constantinople and to force them to capitulate.

On the 29th the Bulgarian cavalry advancing from Kirk Kilisse and Baba Eski reached Lule Burgas, and here they encountered the main Turkish army, a force believed to have been some 150,000 men. The battle front extended over an area of eighteen miles and the fighting was continuous for nearly forty-eight hours. The Turkish position extended, generally speaking, from Bunar-Hissar on the north to Lule Burgas on the south. Late in the evening of the 30th the Turkish lines began to give way. The actual reason of the first retirement is not clear, but apparently the line was pierced somewhere near the centre, and at the same time a Bulgarian flanking attack began to work round the left flank of the Turkish position. Be that as it may, from the evening of the 30th until midday of the 31st the defence still made some headway, although it was rapidly weakening and in various portions retreat had



already begun. Late in the evening of the 31st the retirement became general and on the following day it was to all intents and purposes a rout.

The operations subsequent to the battle around Lule Burgas are rather vague, but the most that is known will be found in a separate chapter. There appears to have been little general pursuit, probably owing to the lack of a sufficient and efficient mounted force with the Bulgarians. On the other hand, on the extreme left flank some units seemed to have been thrown forward, but without any great effect. But, in spite of the absence of pursuit, the disorganization of the Turkish troops, due to the defeat, was sufficiently great to prevent any attempt at re-forming for battle westward of the Tchataldja lines.

About November 6 and 7 the Turkish army, reinforced by fresh troops from Asia, was all concentrated behind these lines, and the advanced troops of the Bulgarian army faced them. The Bulgarians appeared to have made a reconnaissance in force against the lines, probably on the off-chance that the demoralization of the Turkish army might have sufficed to prevent an adequate defence.

At the time of writing this situation has not been substantially altered: Adrianople still holds out and is closely invested by a mixed force of Bulgarians and Servians. The bulk of the Bul-



Servians advancing.



garian army is in winter quarters, facing the Turkish army, and there appears to be every reason to believe that the preliminaries of peace will result in a settlement within a short period.

#### COMMENTS

Until full details are obtained of the operations, comments are necessarily confined to broad issues. The outstanding feature of the operations was undoubtedly the enormous national spirit evinced by the Allies, and particularly by the Bulgarians, who bore the brunt of the struggle. The strain of national service bore heavily alike on townsman and peasant. The closing of the banks and the abrupt arrest of all commerce the moment that mobilization was declared, necessarily imposed severe trials on the people. The wholesale requisitioning of the live stock and supplies in return for paper vouchers, which would have been worthless in the event of failure in the war, meant that almost every individual in the State was risking his all, but there was no sign of grumbling or attempt at evasion. The spirit of self-sacrifice for a national cause imbued the whole of the nation. It was this same spirit which subsequently evinced itself in the actual field of battle, and which made the assaults of the Bulgarian infantry almost irresistible. The national spirit took the place

in large measure of highly-developed training, for, although the higher commanders and staffs were all fully educated soldiers, the level of the regimental officer and non-commissioned officer was by no means high. But where the task of the leader is mainly to restrain the impetuosity of the rank and file, subordinate leading becomes a comparatively easy matter.

As in so many campaigns the broad lines of the strategy were dictated by political considerations and not by an academic application of the rules of war. At the same time, General Savoff's conception of breaking the Turkish quadrilateral at Kirk Kilisse and between that place and Adrianople was bold and, if it had not been justified by success, would undoubtedly have been criticized by military thought. The initial advance of the two armies was along wadies separated by a difficult range of hills. Direct assistance of one by the other was impossible. A defeat of the comparatively small force advancing from Harmenli on Adrianople would have stultified the whole of the operations. The maintenance of large forces operating at a distance of over one hundred miles from rail-head by means of bullock carts alone was essential for the success of the scheme. It was impossible to test the practicability of this before the war began. Competent authorities

did not hesitate to declare it impossible. If the supply system failed, disaster was inevitable.

The tactics of the Bulgarian army were modelled to a considerable extent on the theories of the French army. In the Bulgarian Drill Book the importance of constantly moving forward is fully emphasized, and in the war the keen desire of the men to meet their enemy face to face resulted in the attacks developing with extreme rapidity. On the Turkish side due regard appears not to have been paid to the necessity, in the initial stages of the battle, of holding positions in advance of the general defensive lines, with a view to breaking up the attack and to obtaining information whence the main blow was being delivered. It is for this reason that the preparatory action advocated both in the French and Bulgarian Drill Books appears rarely to have taken place, and the issue of the battles was decided in a much shorter time than would be the case with higher trained antagonists. The weak point of the Bulgarian forces appears to have been their mounted troops, which were deficient both in numbers and in mobility, and which, in fact, appeared to have done little or nothing throughout the whole of the war.

The organization of the Bulgarians and the rapidity and smoothness with which mobilization was effected, affords an admirable instance of the

extreme value of a territorial system of recruiting. On the other hand, the breakdown of the Turkish mobilization appears to have been due in large measure—as was the similar failure of the French in 1870—to the lack of territorial organization. The Bulgarians appear to have been somewhat disappointed in the results obtained from their single line railways in the initial concentration. But concentration by rail, until this war, has in point of fact never been fully tried for military operations, for the Trans-Siberian Railway in the Russo-Japanese War was not sufficiently organized at the commencement of that war to justify deductions being drawn from it. The Bulgarian Headquarters were unduly optimistic as to the capacity of the railway system. The average length of train adopted by the Bulgarians in the preliminary concentration was from forty-five to sixty vehicles. The speed did not exceed fourteen or fifteen miles per hour, and about eight pairs of trains moved up and down the line on each day. The railway movement was impeded by the insufficient strength of the drawbars of the vehicles, which on several occasions on trains broke on steep ascents, causing considerable delay and disorganization of the rail service.

The supply organization of the Bulgarians aimed at enabling the army to proceed by successive



Princess Helene, King Peter's daughter, who brought a Hospital of 100 beds from St. Petersburg, making a tour of inspection of Turkisk and Servian hospitals. Prince Paul, her youngest brother, is beside her (both facing the camera).





advances of eight days' duration without replenishment of the packs and columns from rail-heads. Two days' regimental supplies were carried on pack animals. The supplies in rear were carried on the ordinary country carts drawn by bullocks or horses in two echelons. The theory was that each of these successive links in the supply chain should, by doing a double march, overtake the field units, which it refilled, and then itself awaited replenishment from rail-head. The system appears to have worked well, though the loss in transport animals will, when statistics are obtained, prove to have been excessively high. There was very little mechanical transport in the country when hostilities commenced, and no valuable experience was obtained of the value of this class of vehicles.

An outstanding feature of the operations, to which reference has already been made, was the secrecy which the Bulgarians succeeded in maintaining. Both the character of the people and the inferior system of civil communications facilitated this. The war correspondents were kept with civil General Headquarters, and, relying on the promises of the Bulgarian Staff that they would eventually be sent forward if they adhered to the regulations, they made small attempt to reach the actual scene of the fighting. It would be unwise

to argue from this that a similar course will be possible in future wars. Its success was mainly due to the fact that it was being tried for the first time. The desire of the public of Europe for information would, in future wars, if a similar course is pursued, probably result in unaccredited correspondents pressing forward at their own risk.

A word of warning is necessary against the superficial deduction which will assuredly be made, that the war has shown that national spirit has detracted from the value of higher training of the rank and file. The Bulgarians, themselves, will certainly be the first to disown this, and it is to be remembered that their own training, although undoubtedly it did not reach the standard of Western Europe, was very much superior to that of their opponents. Military training aims at two essentials: *First*, to achieve results with a minimum of loss; and *second*, to train troops to bear loss without demoralization. It is this second requirement alone in which national spirit may to some extent supplant training, but in all wars and with all troops there must inevitably come a percentage of loss of life which the survivors will not be able to face. The present war is no exception to this rule.

The value of a national organization, so that the whole of the manhood of the nation can take its share

rapidly in armed conflict, is perhaps for Englishmen the outstanding lesson of the war. A nation with a population of less than five millions and a military budget of less than two million pounds per annum, placed in the field within fourteen days of mobilization an army of four hundred thousand men, and, in the course of four weeks, moved that army over one hundred and sixty miles in hostile territory, captured one fortress and invested another, fought and won two great battles against the available armed strength of a nation of twenty million inhabitants, and stopped only at the gates of the hostile capital.

## CHAPTER XII

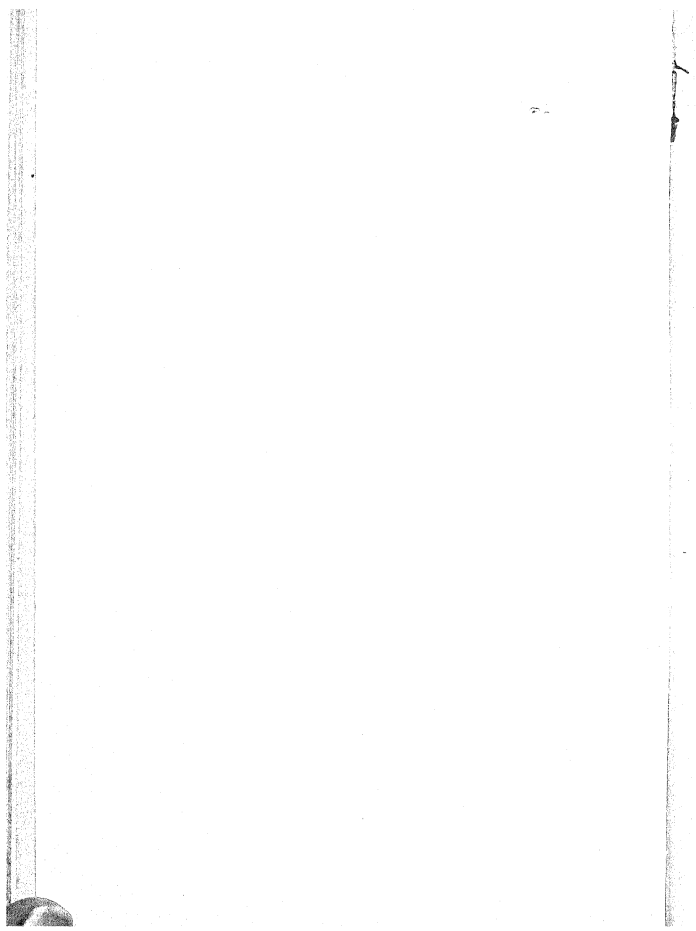
### LULE BURGAS AND THE ADVANCE ON CONSTANTINOPLE

ONLY when the last mutterings of the war have died out, and the reports of the various divisional commanders have been dovetailed together so as to form a full account of the operations, will it be possible to obtain a proper military appreciation of the various phases in the stupendous battle which lasted for the better part of a week round Baba Eski and Lule Burgas, and then on near Tchorlu.

After the attack on Kirk Kilisse the right wing of the Bulgarian Third Army pursued the Turks southwards, while the centre pushed on *viâ* Kavakli and Lefege, with the left wing and a section of the eastern column moving on to Bunar-Hissar. The general idea was to scatter the retreating Turks and force the field army away from its line of retreat. This plan was thwarted temporarily by Nizan Pasha, who drew back his left wing upon Lule Burgas and pushed forward the right. This



A captured Turkish Krupp battery. The entire teams of men and horses were practically annihilated.



change of front undoubtedly saved the Turks from being caught in a most disastrous position, but it also, on the other hand, facilitated the occupation of Dimotika and Baba Eski by the Bulgarian cavalry division.

Monday, October 28, the first day of the battle, was taken up by a series of attacks on the Turkish right wing near Bunar-Hissar. The Ottoman First and Second Corps, under Mahmud Muktar, were echeloned there, and being for the most part composed of seasoned troops, offered a stubborn resistance; indeed at one moment it seemed as if at last the victorious Bulgarians had met with a definite check. The real quality and morale of troops is tested at such a moment; and the Bulgarians lost no time in showing that they could not be accused of the slightest suspicion of a white streak. The Turks had already contrived to push back the Bulgarian vanguard, when a counter-offensive was suddenly ordered, and the infantry swept on in a series of irresistible charges. So swift and impetuous was their onslaught, that their artillery had almost immediately to cease its covering fire, for fear of hurting their own men. It seemed as if solid blocks of men sprang from the earth, like the fabulous crop from the dragon's teeth, and hurled themselves against the enemy. I had heard of the gallant charges made by the



Bulgarians in 1885, when they stormed mountain after mountain with such relentless persistence that finally the Servians would retreat as soon as they heard the first notes of the "Shumi Maritza," the Bulgarian national hymn. But these descriptions were as nothing to the reality. The first Turkish lines were simply pulverized: they had scarcely even had time to think of resistance. With the exception of the Japanese or Gurkhas, the Bulgarians alone of all troops go into battle with the fixed intention of killing at least one enemy. This sudden change from the defensive to the offensive which resulted in the capture of Bunar-Hissar had an important bearing on later operations.

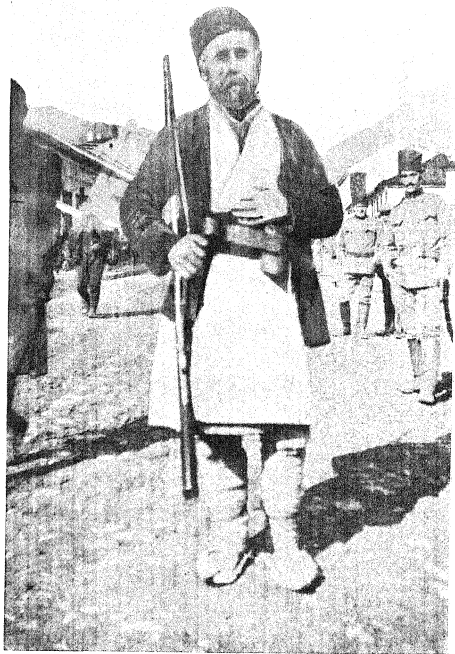
Meanwhile the Bulgarian right wing had been engaged in a succession of small but costly engagements throughout the Monday near Lule Burgas, which gradually became more and more the central pivot of Nazim's army, especially as soon as it was known that Mahmud Muktar had been unable to hold Bunar-Hissar.

The artillery duel of the previous night had fired the village of Lule Burgas itself at a dozen places, so that it was untenable; but the Turks had thrown out an advanced division on the right flank as if to cover the Bunar-Hissar road. Very early on Tuesday morning it was palpable that the Bulgarian

artillery was more numerous and decidedly superior in quality. The bursting shrapnel checked any disposition on the part of the Turkish advance guard to come into close contact, and they were content to remain along the slopes, where it must be admitted they had shown great ability in taking cover. At the same time it soon became evident that the Bulgarians were on the point of repeating their favourite enveloping tactics. South of the Lule Burgas village itself the rail crosses the river Ergene by an iron bridge, while on the northern bank of the river there lies a fair-sized village in the midst of a plantation. This was the point that the Bulgarians seemed from their next move to have destined to use as their base, from which they might penetrate the Turkish wing, and the rapid crackle of rifle fire soon showed that the attack on this point was becoming hotter. As it happened, however, the flanking movement on this section of the battle was little better than a feint, and as the Turks moved supports down to prevent the Bulgarians getting across the railway, the Bulgarian artillery began raking their centre with a hellish fire. By this time the whole vast front of the Turkish army had been slightly swung back until it faced rather north-north-east. The right wing extended towards Sarai and Istrandja, the left southward almost to Rodosto. The reserves were posted at Tchorlu.

The brunt of the real battle, however, throughout that Tuesday fell on Lule Burgas, though at different points along the whole extended line, the Bulgarians were attacking. Early in the afternoon, the Bulgarian gunners had found their range so truly, that the Turks, dour and obstinate fighters though they are, were being literally smothered in the fluffs of smoke, like balls of cotton-wool, which marked the bursting shrapnel. It seemed as if the Commander himself began to fear that the Bulgarians might make one of their dreaded infantry charges, for line after line of reserves could be seen pouring over the ridge of the hills to fill up the gaps, while the advanced division on their right wing was withdrawn.

It soon became evident, even to the fanatical Ottoman, that by pouring fresh troops down the hillside he was only affording fresh targets for the Bulgarian Creusots, and at last slowly and sullenly the order was given to withdraw. The report that two fresh divisions from Adrianople were hurrying down to join the fight, was in itself a sufficient justification for a retreat. Both Turks and Bulgarians were now sadly battle-worn, and these 40,000 reinforcements might have made a disastrous charge on the thinned ranks of the defenders. Even at this crucial moment, with the wicked puffs, showing the hail of shrapnel,



A Servian reservist from the hills.

100

dotting the whole foreground, the Turkish troops could be seen retiring with a kind of placid dignity. Nothing of the rout or panic of Kirk Kilisse was visible here. The slopes seemed peopled with black specks—indeed they looked much like a distant field in which an immense flock of crows is sitting. Two batteries were left to cover this retreat, hidden partly behind a pair of twin peaks, and the Bulgarian guns were turned on their position to try and silence them. The troops themselves had been fighting for nearly forty-eight hours, and it would have been cruel to have attempted an active pursuit, especially as a brigade of cavalry were seen on the hillside, which had doubtless been ordered up to hold the Bulgarians temporarily in check. Had those two divisions from Adrianople arrived earlier, it might have been different, but short of actual panic, any retiring troops would have found line after line of natural defences in which to stand at bay between Lule Burgas and Tchataldja.

The next evening it was known that further south, after a series of desperate attacks, the Bulgarians had driven in the extended left wing of the Turks and had captured the railway station at Murodli. It now became evident that they would inevitably be forced back on Tchorlu, and the troops at Lule Burgas, where the fighting had

really been most serious, were given a night's breathing space.

Nothing remained now between Constantinople itself and the victorious Bulgarian army save the Tchataldja lines themselves, the last ditch of Turkey in Europe. In point of fortification and of armament, the lines were said to be strong, but the defence of any fortification depends more on the spirit and *morale* of troops than on bricks and guns. The Turks must have been badly shattered by the nightmare of the last five days, and though the Bulgarians themselves felt the awful strain of continuous fighting, they were buoyed up by the knowledge that speed was essential if they hoped to gain their ends. Delay would only enable Turkey to bring up her Anatolian and Syrian troops, while military decision would prevent diplomacy from robbing them of the fruits of victory.

No time was therefore wasted. The Bulgarian Third Army was concentrated for a direct attack on the northern wing of the lines; the First Army, which had been reinforced by some artillery belonging to the Third, was massed against the front as if to deliver an attack on the section Ak-Bunar-Bagchetsh, while two southern columns were kept operating on the wing by Yeniskeui and Buyuk respectively, in an attempt to repeat the pressure

which had been so successful twice before. But despite the report that the lines had been pierced at the first assault and that the Third Army had captured the Delijunas fort, it was soon evident that the mad hurlyburly of the last few days was over. To the Turk the repose of the lines must have seemed like Paradise, since throughout the retreat from Lule Burgas they must have seen the indescribable and convincing evidence of panic and demoralization. The details of the horrors on that road from Tchorlu has nothing to do with this brief account of the war, while they have already filled column after column in the Daily Press.

Once the Turks were firmly ensconced behind the lines, everything seemed different. Solid bodies of nizams from Asia Minor and Syria, their *morale* undisturbed and unshattered by the memory of previous defeats, rolled up. Heavy guns were sent on from the capital, the Creusot field batteries, which had been intercepted two months before at Uskub, were set in position, masses of reserves were stationed in the rear in case the Bulgarians should break through any point, in order to retake the position and supply the needful reinforcements.

The Bulgarians had unmasked their batteries facing Papas Burgas and the twin forts of Hami-

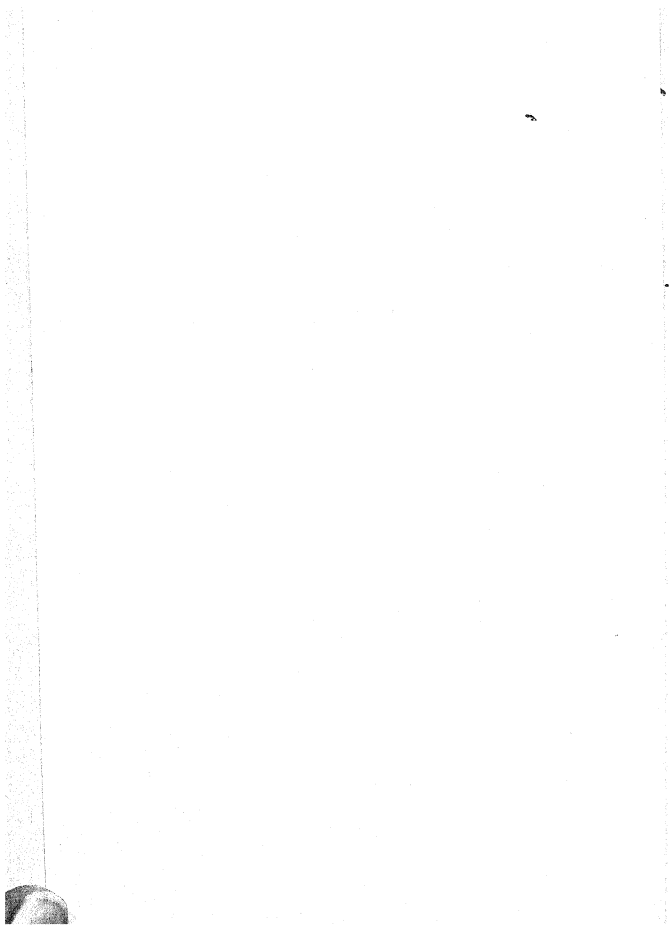


diyeh, but their guns were too weak to be of any danger, and they soon felt for an infantry opening and pushed in by the Papas Burgas marshes and Izz-ed-din, but the effort was not pressed home, and under a vigorous fire from the Turkish batteries the order was soon given to retreat.

What was the exact object of this desultory assault, the Bulgarians refused to explain even in the vaguest way. Did they believe that as in the final stages of Slivnitza it was only necessary for them to show themselves for the enemy to withdraw; did they expect that the Tchataldja lines would collapse like the walls of Jericho? Or were they attempting a reconnaissance with the object of drawing the Turkish fire and fixing the position of the enemy? An assault it certainly could not have been, since it had no weight, was unsupported and lacked all that marvellous fire and dash with which we were accustomed now to associate every movement of the Bulgarian army. On the other hand, if it were only a *prise de contact*, it was singularly ill organized and ineffective. Far too many troops had been brought into action, and very little attempt had been made to keep them under cover, with the result that they had been exposed to a raking fire. Its only value may have been that a direct assault had been planned at this point, that it was in fact merely the screen to a big move-



Prince Alexis Karageorgievitch, cousin of King Peter, who resides abroad, but returned to Servia on the outbreak of war.



ment, and that it was immediately discontinued owing to the awful loss of life which would be the inevitable result even if the Bulgarians won their way through. One thing meanwhile was painfully evident, the Tchataldja lines were not fragile crumbling barriers which cocksureness had made out.

For the next day or two little took place save some inexplicable shiftings and shufflings of troops, and then the news came that the Porte had made overtures for Peace. Negotiations were even in progress. But it soon became evident that the trifling affair at Tchataldja had greatly altered the Turkish outlook. It was nothing in itself, but it was sufficient to inspire the rank and file with the belief that the tide had turned; the new arrival of course placed the matter to his own credit, and the invincibility of the Asiatic soldier seemed confirmed. The demand for the surrender of Adrianople was flatly refused, and dismal rumours began to come down to the Bulgarian lines that many weeks might yet elapse before Adrianople fell. German-built Tarabosh still held out nobly against the Montenegrins. On the other hand, it was plain that the Bulgarian army was beginning to feel the strain. The losses were enormous. It was deemed necessary to call out the recruits of 1913 and 1914. Between the proverbial obstinacy of the Turk and the voracious demands of a portion of

the allies who had done more talking than fighting, the prospects of peace did not seem so rosy as a few days before, and it was plain that, as before, the brunt of the fighting would fall on those who had already done more than their share, the Bulgarians.

One hope remained. The Turks knew that, if they refused peace, and were unable to hold Tchataldja against the allied armies, defeat would mean a victorious entry into Constantinople—that entry which Bulgaria, in deference to the wishes of the Powers, had decided not to make, provided the enemy were reasonable. Were the Turks willing to gamble on victory with this lasting stigma as the stake? It would mean not only the collapse of the Terrible Conqueror's Empire but the shattering of the Khalifate.

In the meantime reports reached the Bulgarian camp that between the Tchataldja lines and Constantinople the Turkish reserves were engaged in preparing a second and even a third line of defences. The spadework which had been so neglected during the previous stages of the campaign was now being prosecuted with a vengeance. Was it ominous for peace? But this question could only be answered by those fez-capped figures which drove out to meet the Bulgarian and Greek delegates in the neutral zone.

## CHAPTER XIII

### WITH THE SERVIAN ARMY AGAIN

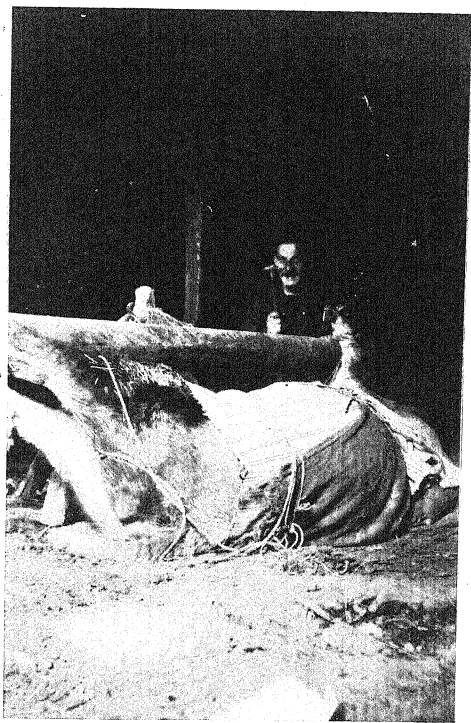
THE remaining operations, with the exception of the battle of Monastir, were of such a scrambled and scattered nature that they can only be compared to the wild chase after De Wet in the South African War when the blockhouse system had been put into effect. Neither from a military nor from the newspaper-reading public point of view did they possess any interest.

King Peter himself lost little time in entering Uskub as the monarch of a conquering army. No fewer than seventeen Tsars, Kings, Governors—call them what you will—had dictated the destinies of Servia, since last a sovereign, whose throne was in Belgrade, had seen his banner wave over Uskub. It might have been the scene of great enthusiasm—the revival of a sumptuous historic pageant—but so fearful were the Servians of an Albanian outbreak, that the aged King, from the moment when he stepped from the train and received the traditional bread and salt, was hidden

away in a body of cavalry, while the streets were lined with troops.

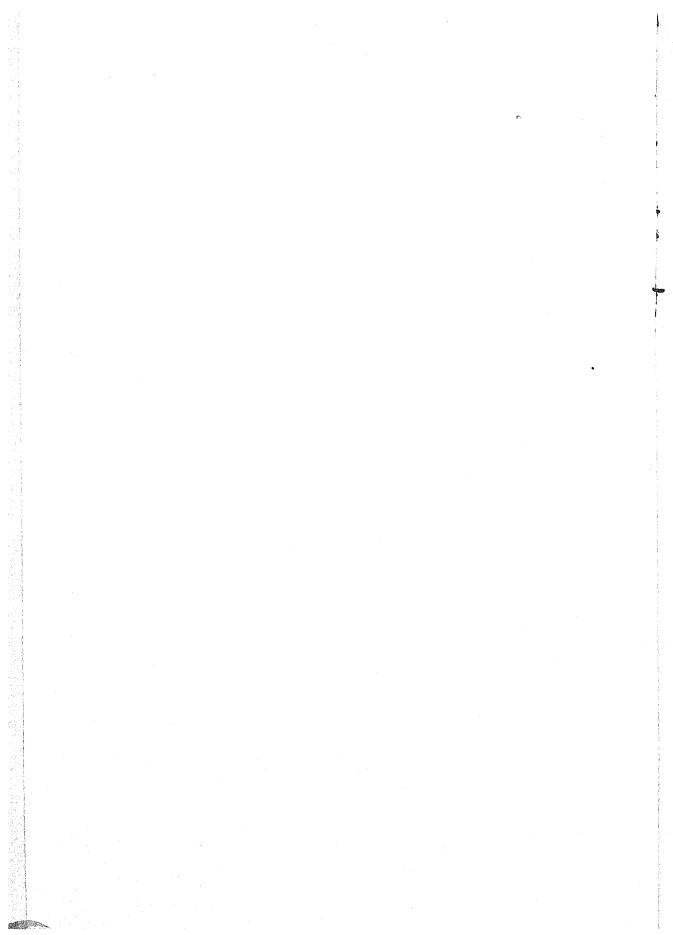
Curiosity rather than a desire of revenge seemed to influence the inhabitants of the old town; for it was already common talk among Christians as well as Moslems that they hoped Old Servia would be granted autonomy and not be incorporated in Servia itself.

As soon as this ceremony was completed, the Crown Prince returned to the front, and the advance was resumed on the two horns from Gostivar and Kuprulu towards Prilep, where it was ascertained that the enemy had massed before falling back on Dibra and Monastir. The over-confidence bred of too easy a series of victories was now apparent among the Servians. The fall of Prilep was expected within a few hours of the arrival of the Servian advance guard, but it was soon evident that a stubborn resistance was in store. In the narrow defiles which yield the only entrance to the town, some 5,000 Turks with possibly thrice as many Arnauts had taken up a strong position. The Servians were unable to bring up their field guns, since the pass was little else than a footpath, and in consequence the combat resolved itself for the first day into a continuous if not very effective rifle duel. On the next day some reinforcements were brought up and the Servian commander con-



Quaint Servian and Turkish method of shoeing a transport bullock





cluded that if the Turkish position was to be won, it would have to be won at the point of the bayonet, although such advance would certainly entail great cost of life. Towards the forenoon therefore the infantry were given the order to charge, and with a ringing cheer two regiments dashed up the steep slopes. The bravery and enthusiasm of the Servian peasants at such moments cannot be praised too highly; and if they were led and handled by officers who had a thorough grip of their men or had taken the trouble to understand their mentality, they would be the equal of any troops in Europe. The officers, however, are of a very different calibre, while such a person as the trained non-commissioned officer, who is the backbone of the British army and knows it, is non-existent. It was the lack of this type of man which caused the collapse of the Servian troops at Slivnitza, and in a tight struggle with a European army trained on scientific principles the lack of such a man will be felt again. The need of skilled experience of an old hand was noticeable even in the repeated charges which were made during that afternoon. The men, reckless of life, never thought of taking cover, and it was not until the evening that the Servian infantry, amid which the 7th regiment had been conspicuous for their gallantry, had at last won through the murderous fire of the Arnauts

and got at close quarters with the enemy. Once cold steel was brought into action, the issue was never in doubt. Like all irregular troops—and memories of the Boers in the South African campaign bear out this fact—the Arnauts showed an unconquerable distaste for the bayonet. The Turkish regulars were not in sufficient numbers to stay the rout that followed, though a couple of machine guns worked awful havoc among the advancing Servians until by sheer dash they had swept down the men behind the screen. The remainder of the fight, or rather rout, was a mere repetition of Kumanovo and Ovtche Polya. As soon as the position was occupied, the Turkish forces, regulars and irregulars alike, dissolved into a mere rabble. Fifteen years before, the Ottoman forces had contemptuously termed the Greek army “the host of hares,” and now by the irony of fate they were showing to the world how they themselves could act in a similar fashion. Rifles, revolvers, cartridge belts, water bottles, even treasured yataghans were hurled away as they fled southwards in panic, oblivious of their honour, of their past military prestige, oblivious of everything save the desire to get away from the cruel thrust and stab of the gleaming steel. The path to Prilep was open, and the next morning the victorious column occupied the town.

While this fight had been in progress, the other Servian force working down from Gostivar had taken Kritchevo with some ease. As far as could be learnt, the Turks were concentrated at Monastir and Dibra, so that the two sides were occupying what was practically opposite corners of a large parallelogram. In the meantime a smaller column had continued on its way southwards to Salonika, where its sudden appearance may have made the Turks think that the entire Servian army as well as the Greek were ready for the attack. Whether this was so or not, the Vali began to make overtures, and after an ineffectual attempt to obtain leave for the garrison to march out with their arms, surrendered the town to the Crown Prince of Greece.<sup>1</sup>

Curiously enough, this bloodless victory was the occasion for the first open signs of jealousy between the allies. In all the Greek official reports no mention was made of the small number of Servians and Bulgarians who were present when the town was entered, and the self-satisfied tone of the Greek bulletin caused considerable annoyance. The most flagrant example of this childishness was furnished by M. Caradjas, Greek Minister in Belgrade, who saw a Servian flag put into Salonika

<sup>1</sup> Rumours have also been freely circulated in Servia that the surrender was hastened by a bribe given to the Vali by two rich Greek merchants.

on a war map in a shop window and entered the shop to tell the man to alter it.

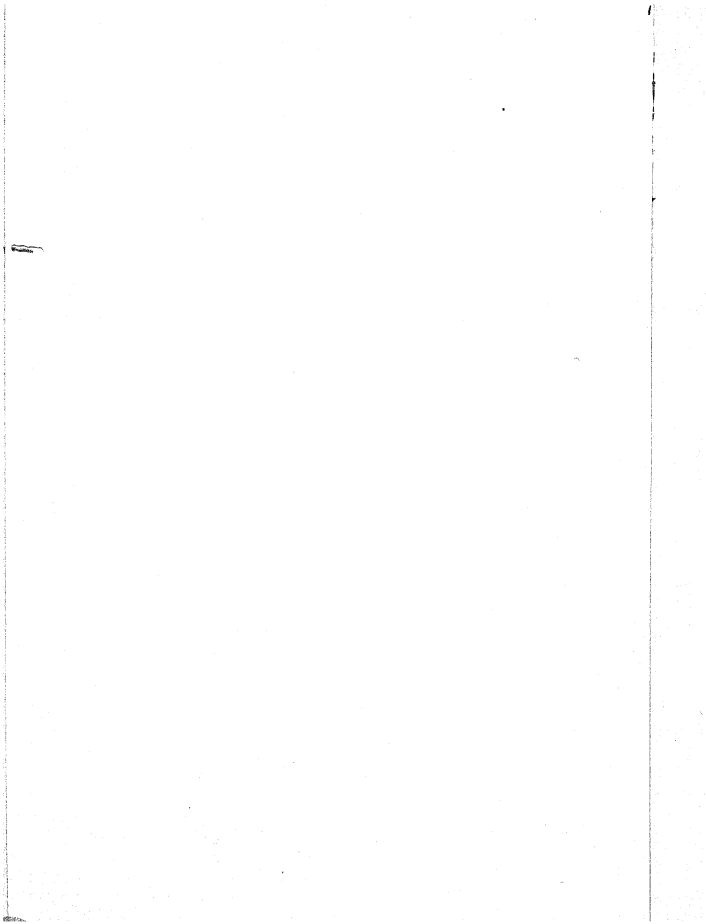
During all this period the Crown Prince of Servia had been lying ill with a severe chill at Uskub, the result of his fifteen hours' exposure in the rain and wind at Kumanovo. He had directed the general plan of the Prilep fight by telephone, and he was at last able on November 14 to leave in his motor for Prilep, so as to resume personally the command over his troops at Monastir.<sup>1</sup>

It was generally felt that the fighting here would be stubborn and severe. Four of Turkey's ablest younger officers, including the redoubtable Djavid Pasha, whose death, or rather assassination, was pure invention, had collected their scattered remnants there, and it was only natural to expect that each of them was determined to retrieve his military honour. The Turks were not without artillery, which was well posted on the heights, while Djavid's influence with the Albanians was a guarantee that a number of them would doubtless take the field. At Monastir, the Turks literally had their backs against the wall: a fight, or sur-

<sup>1</sup> At the same time Yankovitch was sent off on a daring march to the Adriatic coast, since it was believed that actual military occupation of a seaport would give Servia a far better and more valid claim for its permanent retention, and it must be admitted that such an advance if successful would deserve a solid and valuable recompense.



The Vramja town crier summoning the people to hear of the victory of Kumanovo.



render, were the only alternatives, and throughout history it has generally been in circumstances like this that the Turks have performed their greatest deeds.

The possibility of a desperate resistance was the chief topic of conversation among the Servian officers, though the publication of some documents which had been found abandoned at Uskub, caused a little stir, since one telegram referred to a notable personage, whose name had lately been on every lip, the Albanian chief, Isa Boletinatz. Several days before, it had been stated in a number of the Constantinople and Viennese papers that Isa Boletinatz had been killed by some Albanians, who had suspected him of trafficking with Servia. The Servians now received ocular proof of how much reliance was to be placed upon him, since they found a telegram from Ahmad Riza Pasha, dated October 24, saying: "You have received 63,000 rifles. How is it that we have not heard of you being in action?" By a curious coincidence, on the same day a number of Arnaut chiefs, who were evincing signs of great uneasiness as to the treatment which might be accorded to them later, came in and said that Boletinatz was in hiding with barely one hundred followers a few miles south of Prisrend, and that the Arnauts were ready to surround him, if necessary. For the



moment, however, more serious events demanded attention than the capture of a notorious brigand, and so Boletinatz was allowed to remain undisturbed in his winter quarters, and his next appearance in public was among the followers of Ismail Kemal Bey when he declared the autonomy of Albania.

The fighting at Monastir began about 3 p.m. on Thursday afternoon. The Turks were strongly posted on a high ridge of hills, while two twin peaks between Oblakova and Kochishta, about 3,000 feet high, were crowned by a couple of batteries which began to make things very unpleasant indeed for the Servians as they advanced. It soon became clear that if anything was to be done, it was first necessary to clear those two points and the division of the Morava was singled out for that work. The incessant rains had turned the ground into a kind of quagmire, while the thousand and one little watercourses were raging torrents, so that the Servian infantry raked by a galling fire were forced to charge often up to their knees in icy water, while later on they were forced to wade through the Tchernia. Their gallantry under these trying circumstances was remarkable; but the rifle fire combined with the deadly shrapnel, which was now bursting effectually, was too hot, and they were obliged to retire when evening came on.

This did not mean that they were discouraged, however, for remembering their previous tactics in a similar position, the attack on Mount Rulyan, they had determined to wait for the early hours of the morning. This assault was carried out with great precision. Three separate parties worked up the hill, where the Turks through fatigue or over-confidence were not keeping a strict watch. By 7 a.m. the whole ridge was in Servian hands and the Turks had been driven back on to another position which was completely dominated by the Servians until they re-formed on some ground which had previously been prepared. At the same time the Servian right wing was despatched on a long détour which brought them out in the rear of the cluster of hills and astraddle of the road between Dolintzé and Giawar, so that the Turks were now practically hemmed in and would have great difficulty in falling back on Ochrida, since to the north the mountains ended in a sheer precipitous wall, without the semblance of a path.

In the meantime the cavalry swung a little southwards and took up a position in Kognara, while the Servian artillery had managed to silence four siege guns which had kept up a murderous fire from Kekaïna. In the afternoon the Turkish force made a counter-attack with the intention of flinging back the Servians, but after an hour's

bitter fighting they were driven back into their old lines with heavy loss. From that time on the Servians advanced slowly but surely, until at length they came up to within sixty yards of the Turkish trenches, when a fierce hand-to-hand fight took place, which at length resulted in the complete rout of the one wing of the enemy, which broke and fled. Similar tactics were in progress on the centre and left flanks where the Drina and Morava divisions were opposed to Djavid and Zeki Pashas' 5th and 6th corps. The Morava division had to force the Tchernia River and suffered heavily from the enemy's rifle fire, while the bitter cold and the long exposure in the water caused a heavy toll in pneumonia and bronchitis afterwards.

So extended and irregular was the Servian front that it was difficult even for the General Staff to keep check of each phase of the battle, but on the fourth morning it was plain that they were winning all along the line. Helped by timely fog, Djavid Pasha and Zeki Pasha with the remainder of their troops managed to effect their escape and made off to Mount Baba, which, owing to the heavy snows, was supposed to be well-nigh impassable. They seem, however, to have been successful in negotiating some pass, since a day or two later Djavid was reported to be hiding somewhere in the neighbourhood of Lake Presba. Another

shattered division fled in disorder towards Florina, and by scattering through the woods managed to evade the Servian cavalry which was at once launched in pursuit. The next day, however, a large body, which had succeeded in getting off with ten guns, was run to earth at Mesjidli, a village half-way between Monastir and Florina, and after a brief combat compelled to surrender. Another body of fugitives tried to follow the route taken by Djavid over Mount Baba but missed its way and, overcome by weariness, yielded to the first detachment of Servians which came up. All around Monastir a series of desultory combats raged during the next day, but they could have but one end, and the few broken relics of Fethi's division were soon taken prisoners. Fethi's body was discovered among the killed and buried with all honours due to his rank. With him died an inefficient, hesitating general, but a skilful, tactful diplomat, who had been a good friend to Servia and in the days of the late M. Milovanovitch had done much to improve the relations between the two countries.

Meanwhile the victorious Servian cavalry pursued its way and reached Florina shortly before the arrival of the Greek vanguard. The Crown Prince entered Monastir and received an enthusiastic welcome, especially from the Greek residents,

who had been in a state of panic since the defeat of the Greek forces south of Monastir. The Turks had actually taken twelve guns which were used in the battle with the Servians and so re-captured. The spoils of war found in Monastir were enormous, beyond even that captured in Uskub after Kumanovo, or in any town occupied. A mobile brigade was at once sent off towards Dibra where the Arnauts were reported to be rising and disarming the routed Turks, while two days later Ochrida itself was occupied without any resistance on the part of the inhabitants.

At the same time a courier reached headquarters with the news that after tremendous hardships General Yankovitch's column had penetrated to Alessio. In many places the snow had been from three to four feet in depth. The cold was intense, the thermometer often marking 12-14° below zero (Cent.). Guides were often unprocureable, but there could be no stopping, and the army had to find its way through vast gorges and treacherous passes by the light of nature. It was a bold, even foolhardy, feat, but with their flag on the Adriatic the people's ambitions were realized.

The task of the Servian army was now done. They had overrun Macedonia and the Sandjak, had penetrated south to Salonika and west to Alessio. In five short weeks an empire won by the

sword had collapsed under the sword. The Bulgarians meanwhile with irresistible dash had driven the enemy reeling and broken back on their last lines, the tiny fragment of the vast provinces which had once stretched from sea to sea. But the guns which had opened their fire on this final refuge had ceased to boom. The Porte had sent a courier to inquire for an armistice during which negotiations might be opened.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE QUESTION OF ATROCITIES

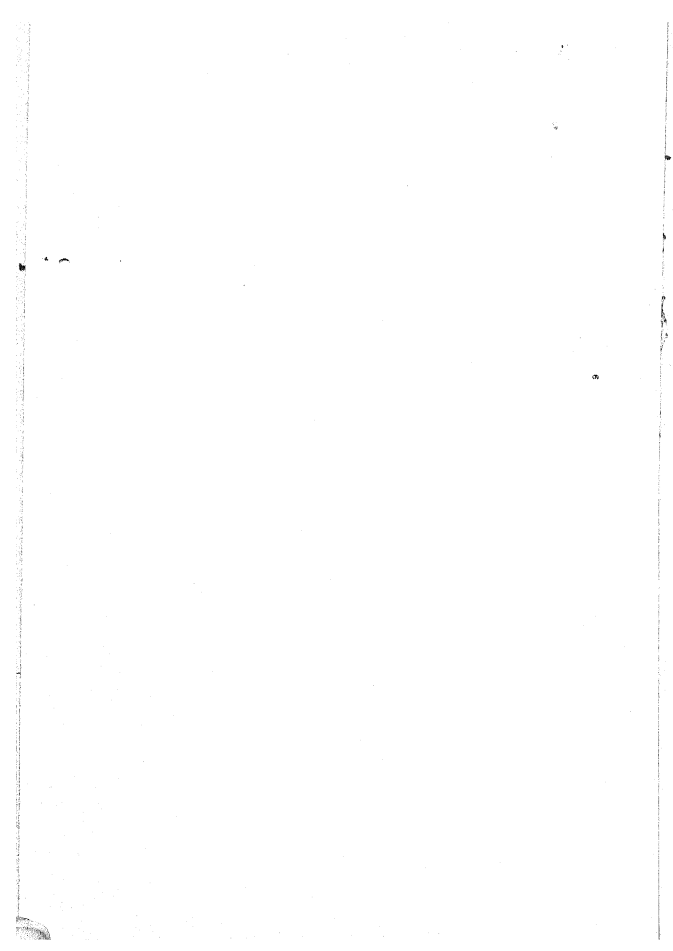
**I**N more ways than one war has been largely shorn of the romance and glamour with which it has been surrounded by full-page illustrations in the weekly papers. The deadly science of long-distance artillery has practically destroyed the possibility of a thrilling picture, save that which depicts the hideous squalid details of a tattered broken army in full rout. But with this decline of war from something heroic, something akin to the sport of demigods, into a frigid super-exaggerated game of chess, there has crept a species of trickery as cowardly as it is disgusting—the appeal to maudlin sentimentality.

War is essentially cruel—in fact, the more cruel, the more bloody it is made, the better, for in that case its duration will the more certainly be shortened. A decade or two back, however, this cruelty was brightened by a chivalrous respect of foe for foe. To-day that chivalry is as dead as the sling of King David's time or the crossbow of the Black Prince.



Turkish prisoners being paraded prior to removal from Uskub to Nisch.





To-day the first and primary object of a belligerent nation is to try and convince the world that the enemy is using or planning to use every dirty underhand trick which could be devised by the human brain. To disseminate this news the agents or representatives of that nation do not hesitate to make use of the Press of a neutral and supposedly impartial people, a Press which in many cases is represented locally by those who have the very best reasons for not being impartial themselves.

The Balkan War was ushered in with the announcement by telegrams issued in the official Greek bulletins, that Turkish medical officers were going to the front with tubes full of typhus and cholera bacilli which they hoped to spread among the armies of the allies. M. Caradjas was asked to prove this statement, but has so far been unable to substantiate a single word; yet no withdrawal has been made of this accusation, which was not denied by the accredited representative of a European State—a position supposedly demanding the possession of tact and gentlemanly consideration.

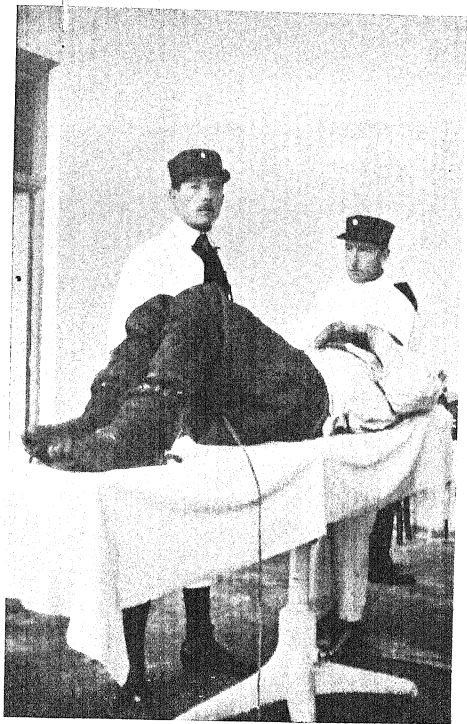
As soon as the war was begun, paragraph after paragraph was inserted in the official bulletin published by the belligerent governments to the effect that the retreating Turks were committing unmentionable atrocities; while the abuse of the

white flag and similar incidents were recorded every day.

To take up the cudgels on this point is a delicate task, and one needs indeed to walk like Agag, since the defending counsel will either be accused of callous indifference or of blinding his eyes to the obvious—generally for obvious reasons. It is impossible to persuade those who have formed a judgment, however onesided, that one is only asking for fair play.

To judge of the horror which is aroused by any atrocity attributed to the Turk, one would suppose in the first place that the Balkan allies were the only people who have suffered from an ambush worked under the white flag, or to find mutilated bodies on a battlefield. Unfortunately the annals of British warfare are full of such incidents. Afghanistan, the Malay States, Ashantiland can all provide examples. Germany must have experienced the same in the Cameroons. In South Africa when fighting a people that could boast of the sympathies of Europe, we lost many a man after the white flag had been hoisted, and, as has been said in a previous chapter, cases were known of our troops even having continued to fire after surrender had been made.

That the Turks have committed atrocities in the past is undeniable ; that atrocities have been com-



Swiss Red Cross surgeons attending a burnt Servian soldier in a Turkish hospital.



mitted in this war is equally undeniable, and that the Turks have taken part in some of these atrocities is possible. But it must be remembered that so far there is no direct proof. At the moment when the talk of atrocities and massacres of innocent people by retreating Turks was at its height, during the second week of the war, the following telegram reached Belgrade from the Servian front, after having passed and obtained the sanction of the official censor: "The further progress is made, the more certain it is that the atrocities are due to the Arnauts and not to the Turks."

The Arnauts know nothing of Berne or Geneva Conventions, and wage war in their own sweet fashion. Because a Gurkha rips up an adversary with his *kukri*, one cannot level a charge of "atrocities" against the British army.

And there remains, last but not least, another side to these wholesale slanders. An excellent proverb exists anent the silence which becomes those who "live in glass houses," and while the "pogroms" can account for over 86,000 people and Holy Russia can wade in a sea of blood which is such that, in the words of the historian, "I do not know where in the whole range of modern history anything to equal this red record can be found"; while the Congo still remains a lasting blot upon our civilization, it is scarcely seemly for Europe to hold up her hands in righteous indignation.

But to go nearer home. Reference has already been made in these pages to the Revolutionary Committee in Bulgaria, whose aim has been to organize a bomb outrage which will incite the Mussulman population in some remote Macedonian village to massacre the Christians in revenge. The full history of the various bands in Macedonia, Serb, Greek, Bulgar, Turk, Albanian and Roumanian, can be read in the Blue Books for South-East Europe; and to-day there are sinister reports circulating among the foreign correspondents as to the tactics of General Zivkovitch's army on the Ibar. It is significant that he has sent back no prisoners, and that one learnt in conversation with Servian officers that none were expected. Men have been heard relating, let us hope it is only boasting, that they shot down eight or nine Albanians in one day. The Continental Press has not hesitated to formulate the charge in as many words, but since there is no more direct proof on this side than on the other with regard to the Turk, it would be better if both were forgotten.

Enough, however, has been said to show how in many cases the Press is used, often, alas, deliberately, to stir up the vilest passions of men. At a critical moment when the relations between Servia and Austria-Hungary were so strained as to threaten an European War, a Belgrade paper published the

following sentence, of which this is a faithful translation: "To-day the Slavs in the provinces of Austria-Hungary are being treated in the same way as the Slavs in Turkey's late possessions."

The educated travelled man would laugh at such a statement, when he remembered the horrors which were popularly attributed to the Turkish régime, but the boorish inland peasant swallows all that is placed before him in print.

Similarly to the bigoted, the fanatical, the narrow-minded and the prejudiced, any accusation, provided it is coloured to suit previous views, bears the hall mark of truth. There is good and bad in every race, and generally the more one knows the race, the more one finds that the good predominates, and so this digression has been penned as an appeal to a return to the old ideas of combat, when one trusted to one's own right arm and did not expect the enemy to have a phial of vitriol up his sleeve.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE LESSONS OF THE WAR

THE most valuable lessons in this life are generally learnt in the bitter hours of failure; and so in attempting to derive some salutary lesson from the Balkan crisis and its subsequent war, one naturally turns first to the defeated side.

Except for a small and select group of foreigners, who were intimately acquainted with the mentality of the allies, and more especially of Bulgaria, the astounding victory of the Balkan League was completely unexpected. The long associations of Marshal von der Goltz Pasha and a number of German officers with the Turkish army; the immense sums of money expended on the equipment of that army under the auspices of Mahmud Sherket, then Minister of War; the historic qualities of the Turk as a first-class soldier, and the laudatory reports published by every Austrian or German military critic, who had seen the troops in the field, combined, and not unnaturally, to prejudice public



King Peter making his triumphant entry into the old Servian capital, Skoplje.



opinion as regards the outcome of the fight. The recollections of how the Greeks had behaved at Domokos and the Servians at Slivnitsa were scarcely likely to encourage a belief in their military prowess; the Montenegrins were too few to be taken very seriously, so that it seemed as if the brunt of the fighting would have to be borne, as indeed it has been, by the Bulgarians, and it was doubted whether they were numerous enough to overthrow such a gigantic adversary.

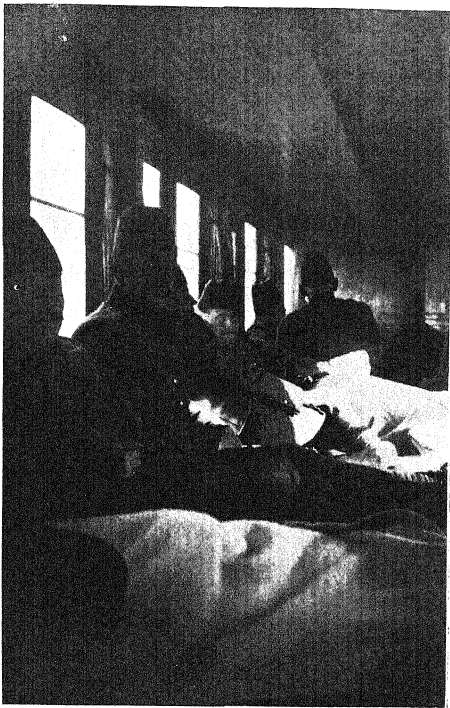
Two weeks were sufficient to prove that they could, rather than they had; and with the Bulgarians it was no mere military processions, as in the case of the Servians, who were only called upon to fight one stiff battle early in the campaign, and who even then were in the proportion of three to one as far as regulars were concerned. The Bulgarians were engaged in a bloody stubborn battle lasting five days, and extending over a front of twenty-five miles—a real modern battle, in fact, to succeed in which, science, discipline, training and individual initiative are as essential as the old quality of bravery, which in bygone days could cover a multitude of deficiencies. But how was it, we may ask, that they achieved with such ease the apparently impossible?

It is undoubtedly one of those grim ironies in which Fate delights that the primary reason of

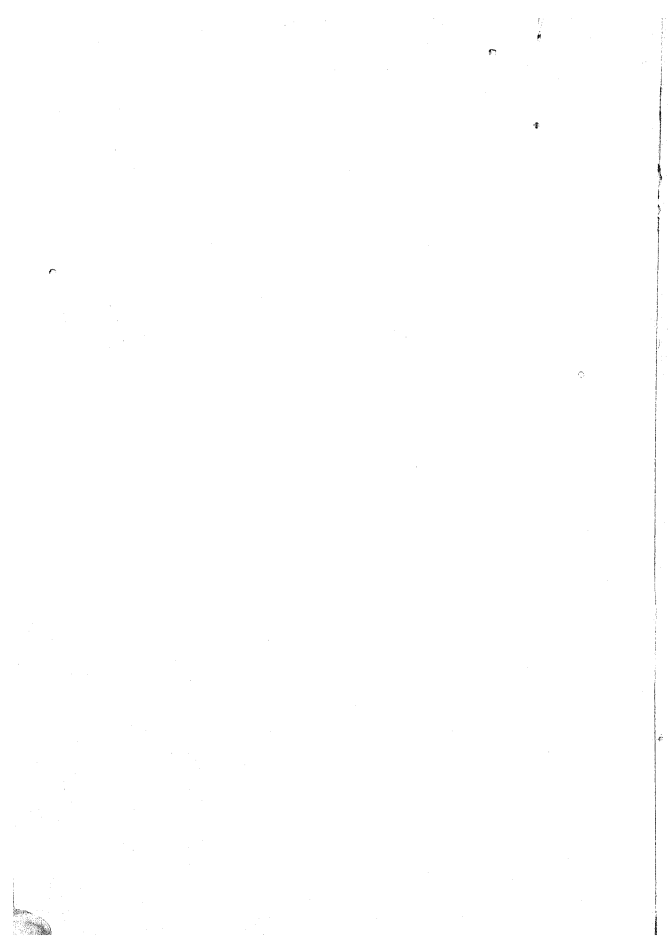
this Ottoman débâcle must be looked for in the régime of the Young Turks, who were hailed only three and a half short years ago as the saviours of the Ottoman Empire. After the military pronunciamiento of 1908 the majority of the younger, and in consequence the more ambitious, subalterns neglected their military duties and dabbled in politics. This neglect enabled Abdul Hamid, the arch-conspirator, to incite the emissaries of Yildiz to pursue more energetically than ever their propaganda in the army. The direct result of this was his last throw for fortune, when the fanatics demanded the Sheriat and Constantinople was plunged in the Thirteen Days of Terror which terminated with the march of the Macedonian Army Corps on the capital.

But even this lesson bore no fruit. Politics flourished only the more rankly under the sinister régime of the Committee of Union and Progress, and instead of attending lectures or studying military science the officers frequented the so-called "Masonic Lodges," which were nothing but political organizations.

The chief result of this new order of things was a shortage of officers, and since the continuous complaint of our own military experts in Great Britain is a similar scarcity—though in our case the cause is far different—we may yet discover



Turkish officers, slightly wounded, being taken to Belgrade as prisoners from  
Uskub.



that we can learn something of value from the rout of the Turkish army. A large proportion of the officers who inspired the Turkish rank and file to the heroic deeds of Plevna were men who had risen from the ranks, and though of no conspicuous elegance or mental calibre, could get their company to follow them anywhere. For the most part these officers were of the sterner Arab or Anatolian stock, and so appealed more strongly to the fanatical fighting strain in the Moslem private than the more nimble-witted but more pliant Levantine. Rankers of this type, however, almost to a man were labelled as "reactionaries" under the Committee régime, and soon had to make way for the successful conspirator and the natty solver of military problems as set by the German instructors. Between the newly-arrived intellectual and the ranker there was a great gulf fixed. The former no doubt was intimately acquainted with his book on tactics, but he was not only incapable of handling his men but he could not even grasp the mentality of his sergeant. The ranker, on the other hand, was as one with his sergeant—in fact, but for his epaulettes there was nothing to choose between them, and so the whole company formed a perfect unit, and as such was a dangerous body of men to tackle.

The heroic struggles of scattered sections of the Ottoman troops during the fighting at Lule Burgas



and after, when they re-formed time after time, despite being raked by a galling fire, won even the admiration of the Bulgarians. "What would they be like, if they were well led?" exclaimed one, on seeing a tiny group of six gather round a veteran sergeant and try to stem the tide along the road from Tchorlu. When whole companies broke and ran, it was nearly always discovered that the officer in charge had been but newly appointed and had not even taken the trouble to learn the names of his men. After the defeat at Kumanovo and the retreat from Uskub, officers could be seen at Salonika swaggering in cafés, careless of dishonour, for it was in the Macedonian Army Corps especially that politics were the general diversion.

Shortage of officers or the presence of the wrong type of officers is a serious thing. How serious, how deadly in its effects, has been proved by these events of October and November. In England our army is handicapped by the same shortage, but little is done to remedy the evil.

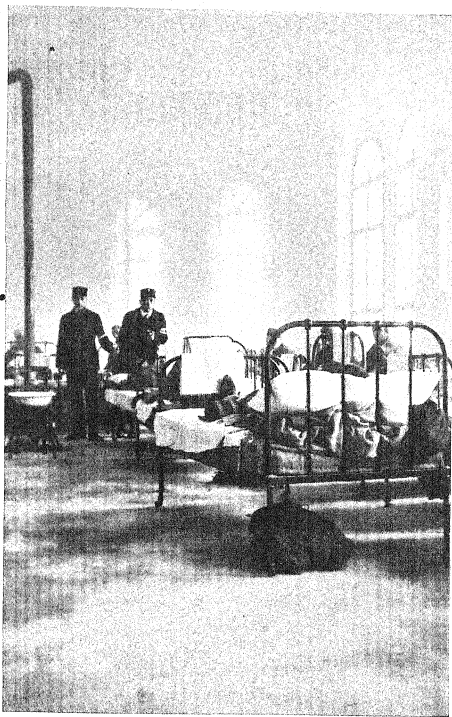
An officer is born rather than made. It is surprising how the quality of handling and of inspiring confidence in men is hereditary. The vast majority of officers in the British army to-day are the sons of officers. Birth and tradition mark out their destiny. But the increased cost of living, and the consequent inability to marry, are doing to the

British army what politics has done for the Turkish. The present generation is not begetting the son to follow; the scarcity becomes more and more noticeable, and even now there are signs that very gradually the men who are coming in are not of the same calibre as their predecessors. Of course it may be said that discipline may safely be left to the non-commissioned officers, who form the backbone of our army; but it is essential for the officer to see eye to eye with the non-commissioned officer as with the rank and file. The old Turkish sergeant is as good to-day as he was at Plevna, but he could not save the disaster at Lule Burgas or Kumanovo. It is to be hoped that England will not wait until she has felt the bitter results of a policy of neglect before attempting to set right a crying evil.

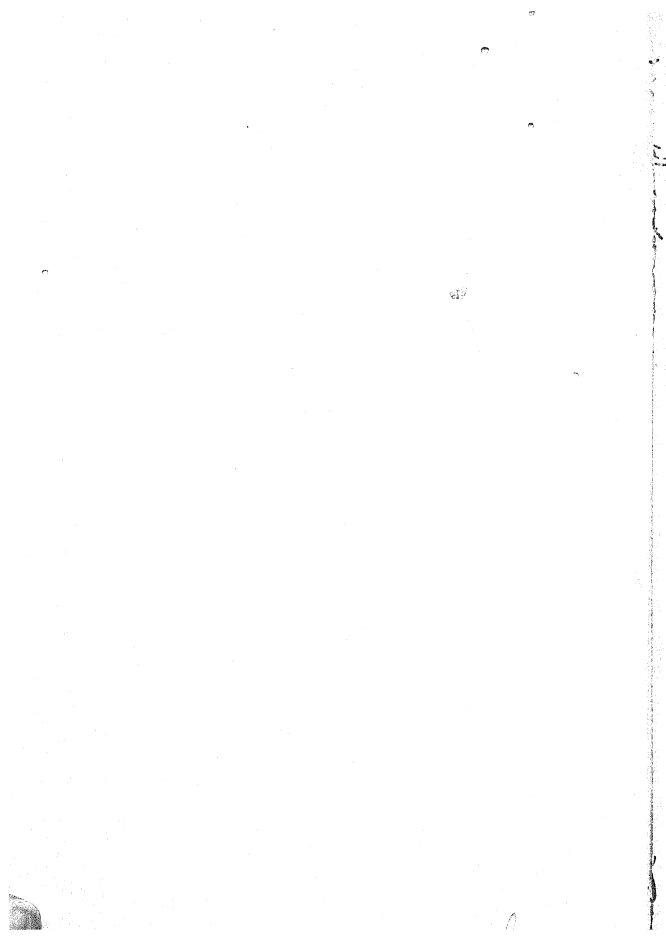
But if we can learn something from the pitiful rout of the vanquished, so can we put before ourselves the magnificent example set by the victors. The spectacle of Bulgarian manhood going cheerfully and confidently to war was thrilling in the extreme; but the knowledge that with a smaller population than our own capital she could place in the field an army of 350,000 first-class trained soldiers should be humiliating to every Briton. This fact even inspired the loftiest organ of the British Press to praise, but with sudden inward

qualms that such might be taken as advocating that hateful word conscription, it was found necessary to add: "But of course such depopulation is only possible in an immature and agricultural state."

That it would be impossible for Germany to put 20,000,000 or 30,000,000 men in the field is beyond question, since in the first place there would be no means of feeding them, while in the second there would not be room for them on any battlefield smaller than a continent. But there is as great a difference between depopulation and national service as there is between patriotism and the lethargy which hopes to "muddle through." If middle-aged business men could leave their offices in Cheapside and their comfortable clubs in Pall Mall, if young emigrants who had toiled and striven day and night to start some tiny store in a distant one-horse township in the Middle West, and could leave that store to go to rack and ruin with all their hard-earned capital in order to come over and fight for their country, surely there must be something radically wrong in the English character to-day if the people cannot sacrifice even six months of their life for military training. In this way more easily than by any other means they could lay for ever that bogey of invasion and that hysterical disease of Germanophobia which are making us the laughing-stock of the world.



A Turkish Hospital; Swiss Red Cross surgeons; wounded Servians and Arnauts mixed. The more seriously wounded are put in the middle, and Arnauts and Servians are on either side of them, to prevent fighting.



Of course when time will have allowed the military experts to collate the mass of documentary evidence which will be forthcoming for the edification of impartial observers, there will be a host of other questions of a military nature on which the war will probably have shed a new light. First and foremost will come doubtless the debated problem of the value of the aeroplane in warfare. It is unlikely, however, if this "war of the five nations," as the Press have loved to call it, can teach us much in that respect. There have been reports from time to time that the Bulgarian airmen have made a flight from Mustapha Pasha, but the fifth arm in this campaign has been used on too small a scale to determine its utility. The unfavourable character of the land—in many parts of the theatre of war it would be difficult to find a landing-place for a high-powered aeroplane within an area of twenty square miles—has prevented aviation being given a fair test, and so the despised cavalry has lived to prove its efficacy in yet another war. But apart from this, there will be interesting enough material—the vexed question of Bulgaria's eightfold expansion of the regiment in war time, a system which gives seven reservists to every man under the colours at the moment; whether they attached an exaggerated importance to their improved hand-grenade—a fact which may have led

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to the attempted direct assault on Adrianople; whether in view of Servian successes, despite the utter hopelessness of her organization, our General Staff may have overdone the minutiae of mobilization, and lastly the comparative value of the French Schneider and of the German Krupp in the field. A further interesting question, though the answer will never reach the profane ears of the laity, is whether our military attachés have proved by their work on this occasion that they are worth the high salaries which a grateful country bestows upon them. Have their reports, their estimates as to the strength of the combatants and their forecast of the strategy and tactics justified their otherwise blameless existence?

This point, however, borders too much on the sacred land of diplomacy, and with regard to diplomacy in connexion with the Balkan War it is better to have a mute and tuneless tongue. The action of the Allied States is the most direct snub given to joint European diplomacy within given memory, a fact which may at least prove a salutary lesson to some. The extraordinary optimism which prevailed in Sofia and Belgrade among the diplomats up to the last moment shows us that in respect of bluff combined with tortuous intrigues the statesmen of the Confederate Kingdoms, with one exception, have nothing to learn from the Chancelleries

of the Great Powers, and there can be no doubt that the recollection of this, will teach future Foreign Ministers who may wish to show in the first few minutes of their holding office, that the cloak of Elijah has really and indisputably fallen on their shoulders, that the first essential for success in that position is to remember the characteristics of another personage, and walk delicately.



## CHAPTER XVI

### CLASHING INTERESTS—THE ALBANIAN QUESTION AND THE ADRIATIC LITTORAL

WHILE the Bulgarians were still forming and re-forming in front of the Tchataldja lines and before the Servians had occupied Monastir, a cloud threatening international complications had already appeared on the horizon, no bigger than a man's hand for the moment, it was true, but yet dark and lowering, as if it might suddenly swell and expand and overshadow the whole sky.

A long run of easy successes was making one of the allies dangerously chauvinistic and provocative. Forgotten was the six weeks old humble memorandum to the Powers, which emphasized again and again the surprising modesty of the confederates, who were fighting not for territorial expansion but to secure peace and liberty for oppressed co-nationalists. Naturally enough it was admitted throughout Europe that the victorious progress of the Balkan armies had prevented any possibility of the *status quo ante*. The

memorandum must not be taken seriously. Territorial aggrandisement was the only possible reward for the four Governments, but at the same time it was generally felt that the old modesty had been succeeded by a far too grasping voracity. Two points especially caused the Great Powers to chafe impatiently, the ambitions of Servia on the Adriatic and the presumptuous idea that Albania, or what Europe knows as Albania, would be quietly incorporated in the Servian Empire.

Two countries in particular, Italy and Austria-Hungary, had long regarded the Albanians as their own cherished protégés. Italian and Austrian priests and agents had been employed for years in the work of proselytism and education: they had encouraged the Albanians in their darling wish of keeping up their language. In a word Italy and Austria had spent a great deal of money and the labour of years, and felt themselves entitled to some consideration where the interests and destinies of these mountaineers were concerned.

Elsewhere we have remarked on the danger which Austria saw in the creation of a big Servian Empire; also on the difficulties which Servia would have to face in collecting taxes from her Albanian subjects and in introducing them generally to the delights and conveniences of ordinary life. To do Italy and Austria justice, in pressing

the claims of the Albanians, they were not influenced by the menace of Panslavism: while as far as concerns the second consideration, it will be seen that Serbia took the future very lightly.

The main contention of Europe with regard to the maintenance of Albania's existence was that Albanians were every whit as much a Balkan people as the Serb or the Bulgar. Indeed, if historic associations counted for anything, and no country was more prompt than Serbia to appeal to the past, as if a thousand years were but as yesterday. The Albanians owing to their antiquity had a greater right than any others, for they had been established in those parts since time immemorial: indeed, it is alleged by certain scientists that they are the representatives of the mysterious Pelargi, who were already historic in Homer's day. The Servians were reminded that they themselves had raised the cry of the Balkans for the Balkan peoples. There was an old adage, "What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander." The Servians had won an ample share of foreign sympathy by the persistent way in which they kept this phrase in the forefront. Under its protection they were carving up the late possessions of the Turk: and they could not expect European sympathy if they turned a deaf ear to others who used and with equal right the same spell.

Austria quite agreed that the war had altered many things, but she pointed out that Serbia had no sound argument, on which to fall back, to excuse what was nothing more or less than a deliberate encroachment on the territory and independence of another race. Count Berchtold in August had adumbrated the scheme of an Albanian protectorate which had for so long occupied the attention of Austria-Hungary and her ally, and Austria lost little time in letting Serbia know distinctly that whatever might be the differences between the two members of the Triple Alliance, on this point at least they were in absolute accord.

Servia repeated her old statements that the Albanians were nothing else but barbarians and that an autonomous Albania would be a constant source of danger to peace in the Balkans. They were without experience of government and could not but fail in any attempt to put their house in order owing to the numberless feuds and vendettas which existed between their clans.

Admittedly in these remarks there was a certain amount of truth, but they could not be accepted as forming any link in a chain of evidence which would prove indisputably Servia's claim to the land, save that she had occupied it by force of arms. Had she based her claims on the fact of military possession, it would at least have been an honest

straightforward one, capable of being answered in a similar way. That the Arnauts and other Albanian tribes had taken up arms against the invading army was self-evident, but their defeat did not necessarily entail their absorption by the conqueror. Had the fortune of war been different, and had the Ottoman army advanced successfully and occupied Servian soil, it is absolutely certain that the Great Powers would not have permitted any change in the existing frontiers. The Bulgarians, who after Slivnitsa had penetrated as far as Nish, got nothing. All precedent was against this seizure of Albanian territory for that reason.

Furthermore, a race which can produce men like Scanderbeg, Tebelenli Ali and scores of grand viziers and successful generals in the Ottoman Empire is not exactly barbarian and certainly is in no need of lectures on how to govern or of homilies on civilization from Belgrade, where only nine years ago a group of officers holding high position in the army were not content with murdering and mutilating their King and Queen, but descended to theft and pilfering from the different bodies which they had treacherously shot down.

The one person who ever handled the Albanians with genius was Abdul Hamid, and he really owed his success to the fact that he treated them as

his *enfants chéris*. He refrained from pressing any Turkish customs upon them, whereas the Young Turks had promptly started to "Ottomanize," a process which at once involved a long and bloody struggle. No one can deny that it will be most difficult to settle the question of an Albanian state, but it is indisputable that government by Serbia of all countries will not be the remedy so sorely needed.

The coveted port on the Adriatic opened up the old danger once again, though of course it was equally connected with the Albanian difficulty. Serbia declared that a port on the Adriatic was absolutely vital for her development: otherwise she would be merely strangled. The new railway line which would link the Danube with the Adriatic, starting from Kladovo, through Nish, Kurshumlia, Prishtina, Prisrend, Djakova, Scutari, and so to San Giovanni di Medua or Durazzo would be topping almost virgin soil. Sympathizers were also reminded that in the days of her old mediaeval empire these ports had been under Serbia, though it had to be admitted for a very brief period.

Austria frankly objected to a Servian outlet on that sea, since she had visions of Russia and not Serbia being there in reality. The argument with regard to economic and commercial strangulation was shown to carry little weight, since Serbia would

already have a line for economic development from Uskub to Salonika. With the ratification of a custom's treaty between the four allies, she would have a port at her very doors. It was pointed out that the cost of the Danube-Adriatic line would be enormous, since it would have to negotiate the northern half of Albania. Austria recalled the section of line from Agram to Fiumi, which had to go over the Karst plateau and was run at an enormous loss every year, though naturally the profits on the vast system of the remaining lines made this good. In Serbia, however, there was no such system of railways to counterbalance, and the Government would either have to face the loss or impose such huge rates on freight that it would never pay to send goods by such route, especially when the Salonika railway was close at hand as a dangerous competitor.

In addition to this a famous German publicist,<sup>1</sup> in a most illuminating article, dealt with Durazzo and San Giovanni in quite a new light. Having followed the sea himself as a profession, without having ever visited either place, he turned to the naval instructions with regard to the Adriatic coast and discovered that the harbour is ridiculously shallow and that owing to the nature of the bottom it would be an enormous task to construct harbour

<sup>1</sup> Captain Persius in the *Berliner Tageblatt*.

works capable of allowing vessels of any draught to enter and of sheltering them from the west winds. The more the searchlight was thrown upon the argument of vital interests and economic strangulation, the feebler that argument seemed to be. On the other hand, with a huge European Power in the background, nourishing hopes of a re-born navy, the construction of a naval base would not be surprising, while its position below that neck within which it would be so simple to bottle the Austrian fleet could only be extremely distasteful to the latter power.

Overtures of a private nature were made to the Servian Premier by the Austrian Minister in Belgrade about the middle of November, but the Servian Press lost little time in making capital out of this and increased the tension by stating that Austria made Serbia's agreement to a Secret Customs Alliance a *sine qua non* to any negotiations. This, it may be said, was a barefaced falsehood, but it was too eloquent a proof of the jingoistic tendencies of the nation. On the question of the incorporation of Albania, Serbia was not so obstinate, but since she remained absolutely irrevocable with regard to the Adriatic, it was clear that there still remained a problem which would test the cleverest brains in the world before a solution could possibly be reached: and that the delimitation of

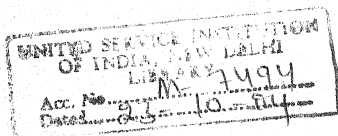


Albania. If Serbia was allowed to retain the littoral from San Giovanni to Durazzo what would be the boundary of her hinterland? The Servian Imperialists urged that a railway was useless unless it was covered on both sides by a wide stretch of Servian territory, and she therefore claimed that the tongue of land giving her approach to the sea should be some fifteen miles broad on either side of the railway, and that the hinterland should go as far back as the Lake of Ochrida.

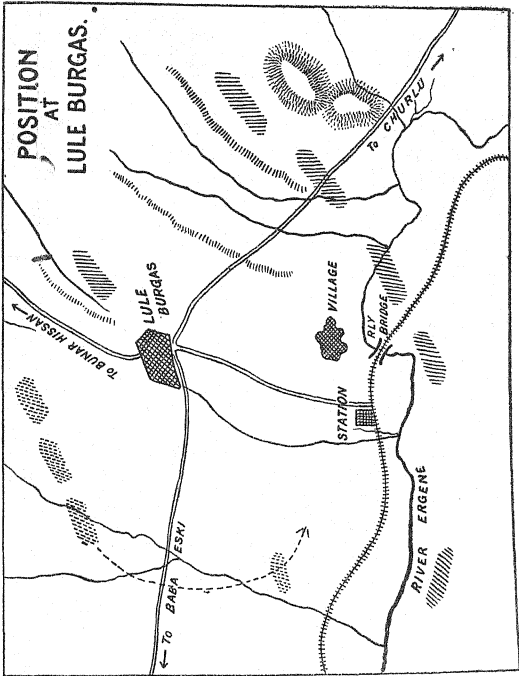
At the end of November some yellowpress journalists suddenly spread the report in Belgrade that Austria was moving down masses of troops to Semlin, the little frontier town on the Danube, which has been used twice before in history as a convenient base for attacking Belgrade. On all sides there were rumours of mobilization, so that in some circles the canard gained easy credence. It was discovered the next day that the only ground for such a statement was the presence of a squad of infantry at the station! As a matter of fact the international situation had never been so hopeful. The Tsar had received the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador in audience that very morning, and it was stated both in Berlin and St. Petersburg that Austria had determined not to press her demands until the war of the Allies with Turkey was over, when it would be possible to discuss the

matter calmly and quietly. At the same time views were being exchanged regularly and consistently between the Governments of the Great Powers, who trusted to find some solution which would prove capable of acceptance by either party. The tension was undoubtedly less acute, but it was obvious that in the near future Austria and Servia must be prepared for a mutual give and take in their negotiations. However flimsy the pleas submitted by Servian statesmen and representatives to prove their claims to Durazzo, the march of that column in biting cold through the Albanian snows does demand some recognition; and there is little doubt that if Servia would be satisfied with a railway internationally guaranteed against Albanian depredation, Austria would not obstinately hold out its objection to a Servian port on the Adriatic, provided it is unfortified. On the other hand, if there are really secret ambitions in the background of this scheme and such a compromise is of little value to those pulling the strings, it is most probable that in face of European disapprobation, Servia will make a virtue of necessity, and we shall learn that the demands have been relinquished. Even then, however, there will remain the geographical problem of Albania, which must be left to an European Congress, but it is indeed curious that only a few years ago

a famous Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs should have denied the existence of an Albanian Problem, whereas the propositions of Count Berchtold in August fired the train, as it were, of the present struggle, while the future delimitation will certainly create a new interminable problem in the Near East.



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